A Starter Guide to Facebook Pages for Parishes

This guide is meant to get you started with the basic of maintaining a church Facebook page, but it is not meant to be exhaustive. Some screenshots are included as examples, but as Facebook changes the layout of various sections of their site periodically, please understand that some things may move/change over time.

If you need to delve further into any topic than this guide does, the Facebook Help Center (www.facebook.com/help) is a very useful resource.

Facebook Pages vs. Facebook Groups – What's the Difference?

There are two primary differences between having a Facebook page, and a Facebook group: voice and access.

On a Facebook page, only people with access to post AS the page can post to it such that posts appear in the newsfeeds of anyone who has subscribed to the page ("Liked" it). If someone who is not a page admin attempts to post to the page, their post only shows up in the "Visitor Posts" section. If a page admin decides that their post should appear on the main page, they can re-post the content there, but visitors do not "speak for the page" by default. Anyone with a Facebook account can access Facebook pages. (A user can be banned from a page by an admin for that page, for instance if they attempt to post unpleasant material in the visitor posts section. But by default, Facebook pages are publicly viewable.)

To contrast this, in a Facebook group, anyone who is a member of the group has an equal voice. If they post to that group, their post will appear in the newsfeed of other group members, under the name of the group. Group admins do have the ability to remove posts to the group and ban group members if they behave badly, but this is purely reactionary – the damage has already been done. So access becomes extremely important. If your group is public, it can be accessed by any Facebook user. The things you want to share about your parish are there for anyone to see, but you may also become the target of spammers. If your group is private, people who look for it can see that it exists, but they have to request to join and be approved by a group admin. This gives you more control over who has a voice in the group, but it also means that your parish events/news that are shared within the group are not seen by anyone not already connected with your parish. (Facebook also has secret groups, that can only be seen by those invited by a current group member, and then approved by an admin, but it seems unlikely these would be useful to parishes.)

When it comes to sharing the news about your parish, while still maintaining control over the message put out under your church's banner, Facebook pages are preferable, and therefore they are the sole subject of the remainder of this guide.

Creating a Page

In order for you to create a page for your parish, you will first need to have a personal account on Facebook. (Ideally, you should also have some degree of comfort using Facebook, though this is not strictly required – it just makes things easier.)

Log into your account on a computer (desktop or laptop is fine, but this is easier if you're not on a mobile device). Once you have logged in, click on "Pages" from the list of items on the left side of your screen.

On the next page, you will see several tabs that encompass the pages that are suggested for you by Facebook based on your interests, pages you have been invited to like, pages you have liked, and pages to which you already have admin access (if any). On the right side of the screen, across from these tabs, click the button for "Create Page".
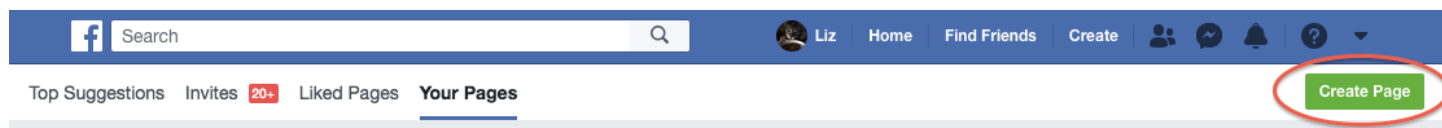

On the next page, you'll be asked to identify as "Business or Brand", or "Community or Public Figure". If you're creating a page for a parish, you should choose Community or Public Figure, as this is intended for non-profit organizations (which churches are), and your parish family is a community!
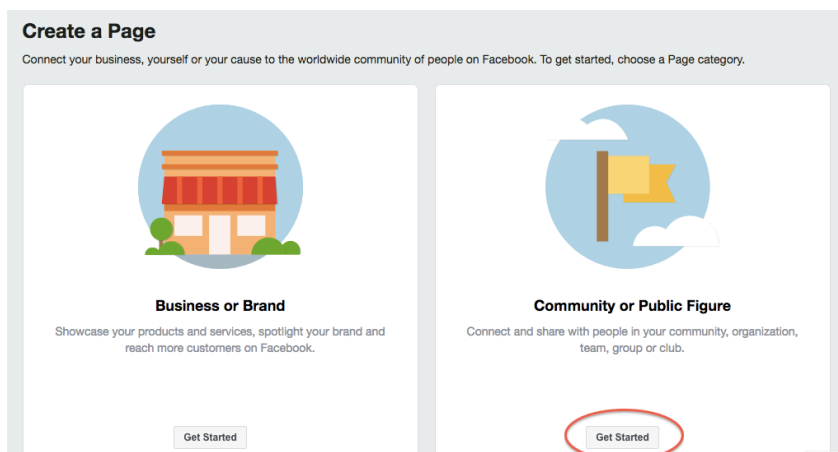
Once you click Getting Started, you will be asked to enter some basic information for your church. (An example is depicted below, but this page is not actually being created. Further examples will use screenshots from a previously existing page.)

Once your page is fully created, then whenever you log into Facebook and click "Pages", you will see it listed under "My Pages" on the next screen, along with a selection of recent (usually within the past week) statistics for your page.
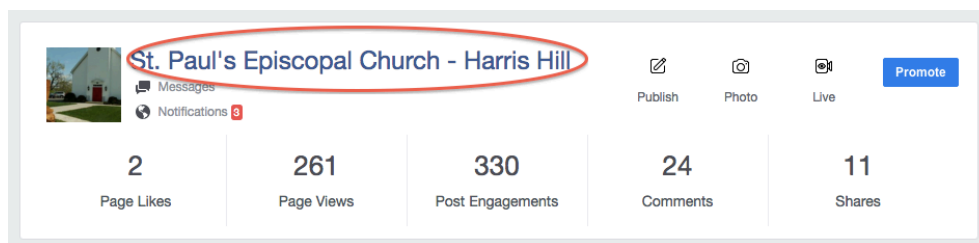
From that screen, click on the name of your page.

The Basic Anatomy of Your Page

When you visit your page for the first time, look first at the URL for that page in the address bar of your browser. This link, in it's entirety, is the address of your page. (If you want to, say, include a link in your email newsletter, that's the link to use.)

Below the address bar is the blue Facebook search bar, which contains also contains links to your personal account, friend finder function, notifications, and more.

Below the blue search bar is a white bar of links that are only visible to those who have access to the admin tools of your page. For now, this means you, as the page creator. We'll touch further on appointing admins, and common admin functions later in this guide.

Below this are two pictures. Just like on your personal Facebook account, the smaller photo to the left is the profile picture for the page, and the larger photo to the right is the cover photo. Just like with your account, you can add/update those photos by rolling over them and clicking to update them.

Below this on the left side of the screen are links to various sections of the page. You can click them to see where they all go (though they're rather self–explanatory). Since your page is new, there's not much there yet – we'll fix that shortly.

On the right side of the screen are links to like your page (if you haven't liked your own page yet, do it now!), to follow/unfollow page posts, and to share your page on your personal account, for your friends and social connections to see.
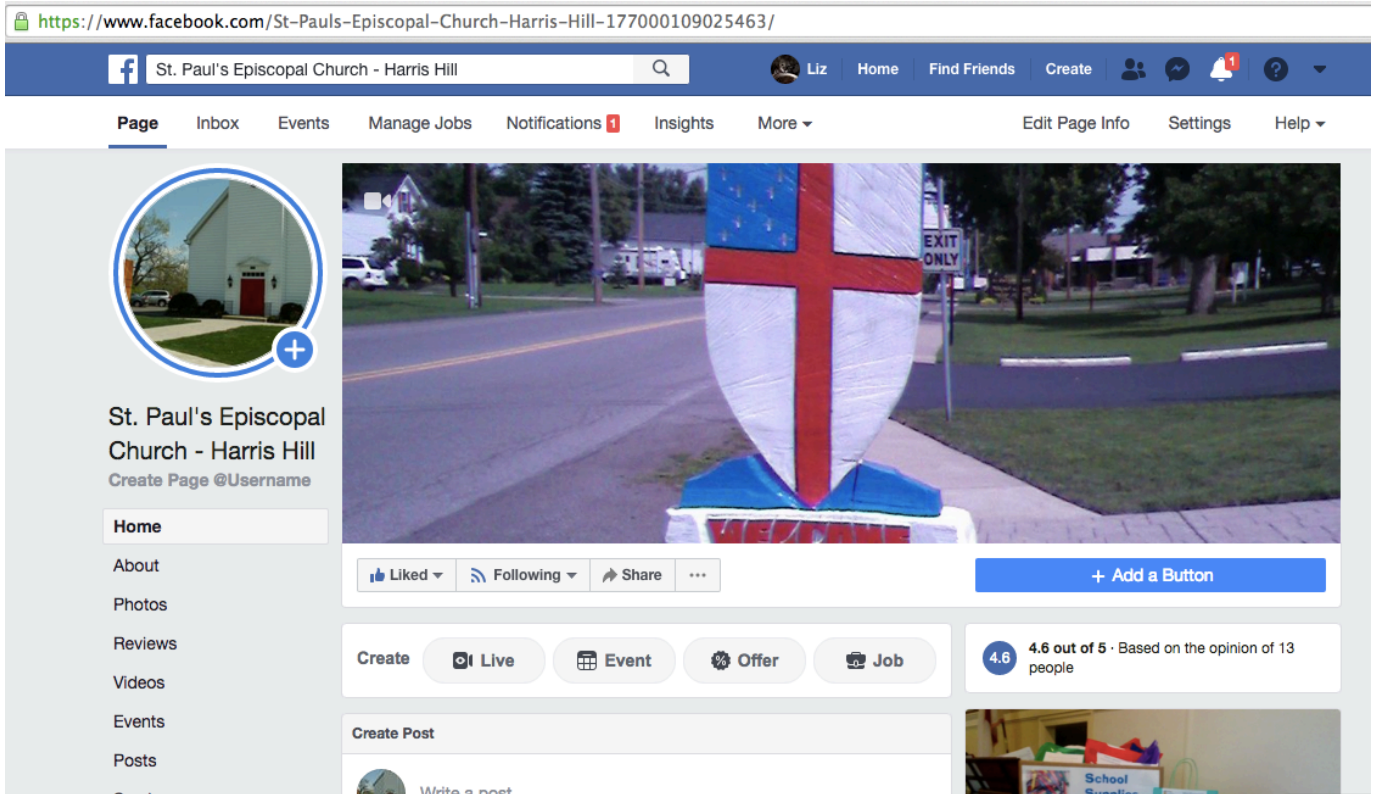
Posting Content to Your Page

Continuing down the page slightly, you will come to a set of useful links where you will spend most of your time interacting with the page.
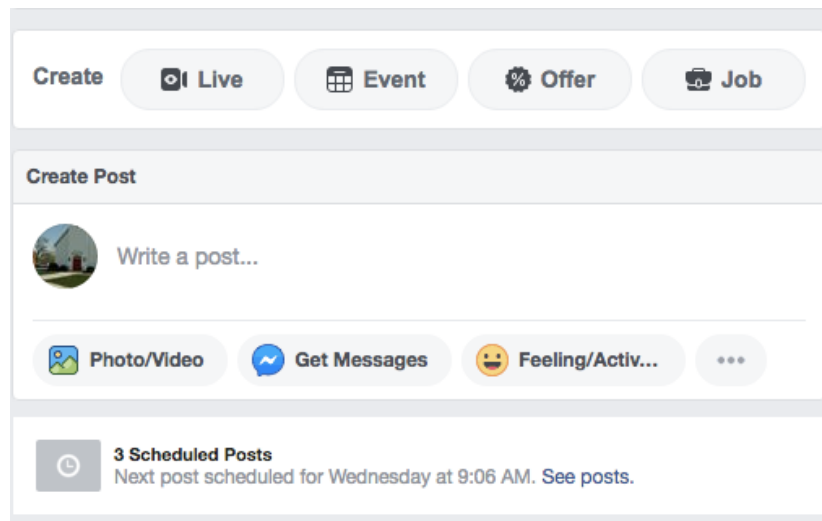
You can use the Create Post box to add stories, photos, and videos to your page. This functions much like your personal page; if you've ever posted to Facebook, this works in much the same way. Type what you want to say, add photo(s) or video, and click Post. Your post will appear immediately, both in your page's Timeline, below the Post Creation area, and in the Newsfeed of anyone who has Liked your page and is following it.
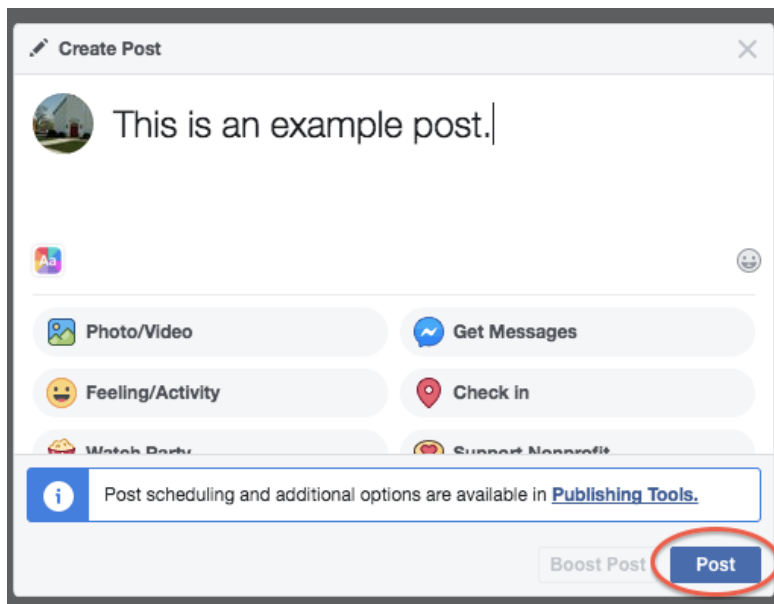
It is important to note that the prominence your posts may have in the newsfeeds of your followers is controlled to some degree by the level of interaction they have with your page. The more they visit it, like your posts, comment on them, and share your content, the more they will see your content when you post it.

Once you've created your first post, share your page with your friends, and other members of your congregation, so that they can Like it and become followers of your page. Encourage them to visit your page regularly and comment on the posts you create, so that Facebook can learn that your page is of interest to them.

Scheduling Content Ahead of Time

There is one cool capability that pages have that personal accounts do not – you can schedule posts to appear on a future date/time. This means that you can spend a little time planning out the content you want to post, and set up posts to appear at regular intervals, without needing to spend time manually posting each time.

To schedule a post, look at the admin toolbar above your page's cover photo, click "More", and select "Publishing Tools".
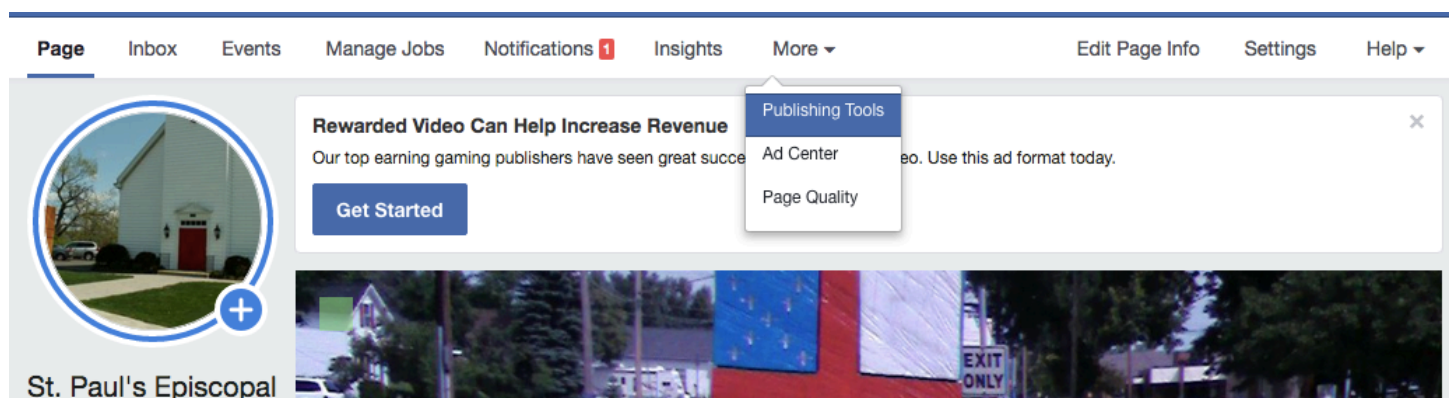
On the next page, you will see a list of all of your published posts, with the newest at the top, and the oldest at the bottom. For each post, you can see at a glance how many people on Facebook it has reached, and how many have interacted with it by clicking of commenting on it.


On the left are links to your Scheduled Posts, your Drafts, any Stories your page has posted, and more.

For now, look at to the right, just above the list of posts, for the blue Create button, and click it.

Compose your post in the box that pops up, but instead of clicking the blue Share Now button at the bottom, look just above it for the drop-down box that gives different posting options. Click it, and choose "Schedule".

Another box will pop up asking for the specifics of when you want your post to appear on your page. Fill this in, and click Schedule.
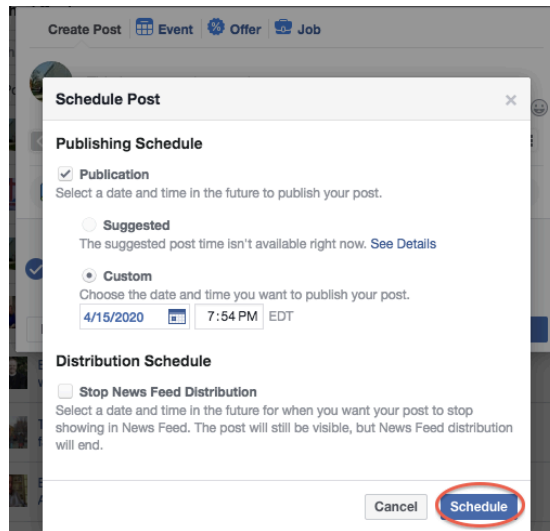
Now, when you will return to the box where your post is composed. Notice that the button that previously said "Share Now" has changed to "Schedule Post".
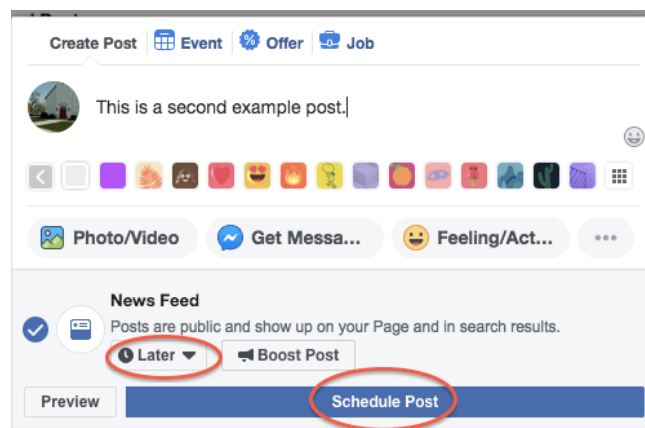
At any time, you can view your scheduled posts by clicking the "Scheduled Posts" link in the left column of the Publishing Tools page. From here, you can edit posts that have not yet been posted, change the date/time that they are scheduled to post, or delete them entirely.

A count of how many posts you currently have scheduled, as well as the date and time of the next post scheduled also appear on the main page view, just below the post creation box. (This is only visible to page admins.)

To go back to the main page view, click the "Page" link in the Admin toolbar.

## Additional Thoughts About Posting Content

In addition to posting stories, photos, and videos, you may also want to publish Events for things that your parish will be doing, or go Live for events that you want to share during the time that they are happening. There are links to both functions on the main page view, just above the post creation box. They work just like posting an event or going Live in your personal account work, except that they post to the page, and all of the page's followers. Whenever you are creating a post, it can be helpful to look at the thumbnail of the profile picture that appears in the creation box. It is a quick clue of whether you are about to post to your page, or to your personal account. Don't mix them up!

Admins – Controlling Your Page's Voice

Managing a page can be a lot of work, depending on how frequently you post, and how much/how frequently your visitors interact with it. To avoid becoming overburdened, you might call on other trusted members of your parish to help by posting content, or moderating comments/visitor posts. Remember that anyone who has admin access to your page is able "to speak as your page", so consult with your parish leadership about who might be a good fit.

You do not need to be Facebook friends with someone to add them as a page admin. Just make sure you know the email address that is associated with their Facebook account.

From the main page view, click "Settings" in the Admin toolbar. There are a lot of different options here to control the appearance of your page, and the level to which visitors can interact with it, but for now, look down the left side of the page for "Page Roles" and select it.
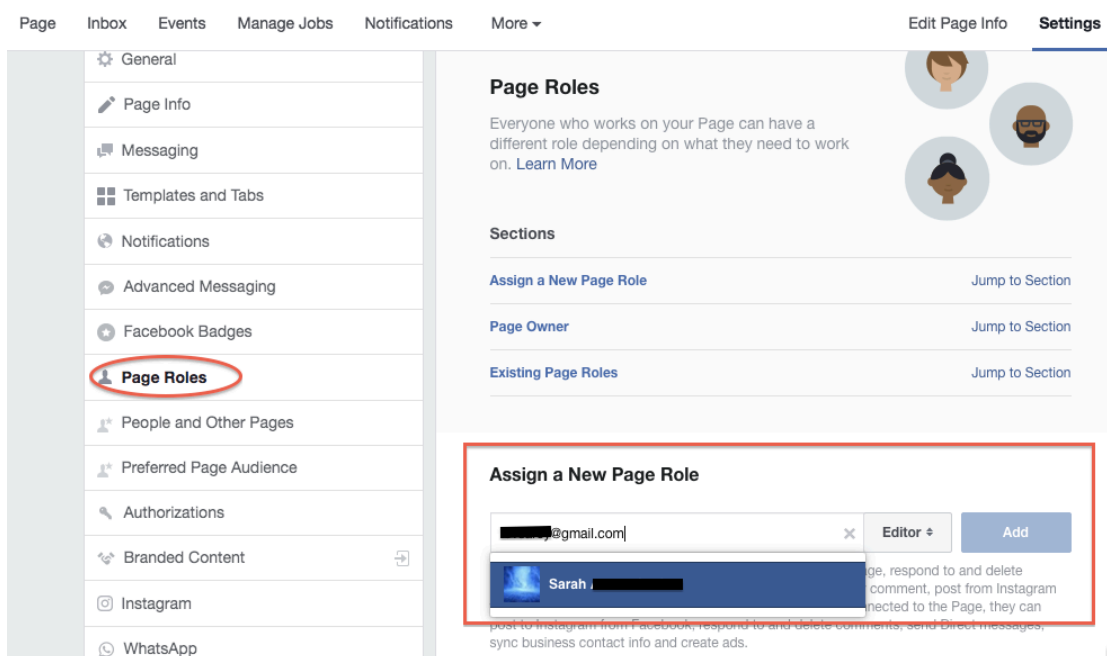
In the box for Assign a New Page Role, type in the email address of the person whom you are adding. This should open a link to their Facebook account, when it appears, click on their name.

Next, to the right of their name, there is a drop-down box that opens to a list of different roles someone might carry out on your page. If you select a particular role, then you will see a list of everything contained within that role below the box. For most parishes, though, it's useful to have at least 2 people who are page admins, and depending on how much you are distributing the responsibility for your page, 1 or more Editors.
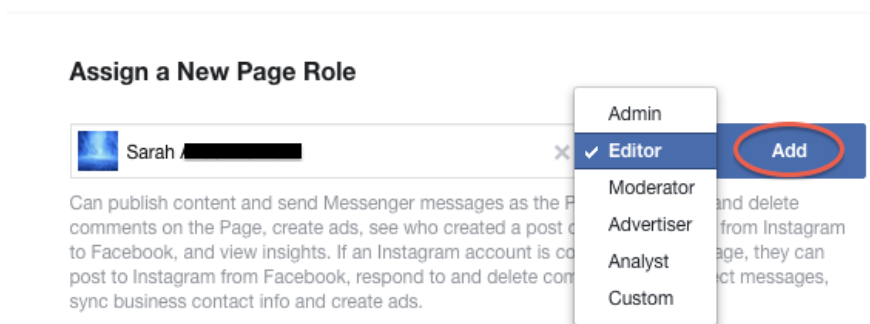
Once you've chosen the appropriate role for the person you're adding, click the blue "Add" button.

If you scroll to the bottom of the Page Roles page, you can see a list of everyone who currently has a role assigned to them, as well as edit/remove roles, if necessary.

In addition to creating content for your page, a common task that may be asked of your Admins and Editors is to monitor posts made to the page by visitors, and comments left on your page's posts, in ensure that they do not include content that is inappropriate, illegal, or spam.

When admins/editors view visitor posts or comments, they can click the 3 dots to the right of said post/comment to bring up a menu that shows what actions they may take. Admins/editors have the ability to delete both visitor posts and comments. In addition, they may ban a particular visitor from interacting with the page entirely. (No one was actually banned in the example below!)
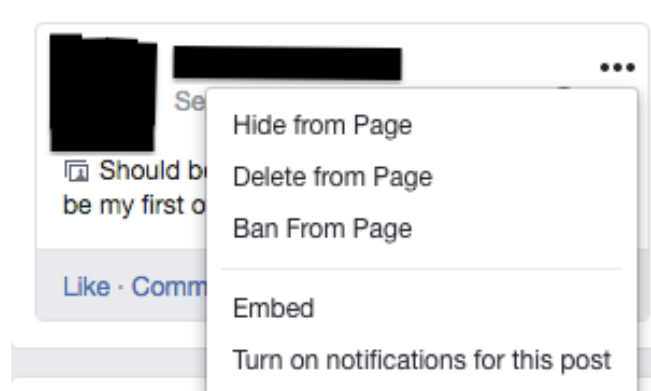
It is important that page admins and editors be in regular communication, both with each other, and with the leadership of your parish. Everyone should be on the same page regarding what content is and is not appropriate for inclusion on your page. By defining this from the beginning, you will make your admins' jobs easier.

One important thing to remember is that it can be okay sometimes to disagree, particularly when disagreements are worded respectfully. Just because a particular admin disagrees with something, this doesn't necessarily mean it should be removed. By checking in with each other, you can get a sense of whether something truly violates the standards of your parish community (if so, do remove it), or merely rubs you the wrong way.

In Conclusion

What has been covered in this guide are really just the most basic functions of a church Facebook page, but it should help you get off the ground and running!

If you have additional questions, contact the Diocesan Office for assistance, or check the Facebook Help section (www.facebook.com/help).