

St. John's Church Killingworth **Social Media Acceptable Use Policy**

Policy Statement

The internet provides unique opportunities for the members of St. John's Church, Killingworth, paid staff, volunteers to promote activities and events, share information and participate in interactive discussions on particular topics using a wide variety of social media such as :

- Website
- Facebook
- Whats App
- Use of mobile phones for Pastoral Group to contact congregation (phone contact rather than visit) when appropriate.

We actively encourage staff and members of media group of St. John's, Killingworth to use these mediums but we also recognise that the use of social media can potentially pose risks to St. John's Church, Killingworth, confidential information and reputation, and can jeopardise its compliance with legal obligations.

To minimise these risks, to avoid loss of productivity and to ensure that St. John's Church Killingworth Information and Communications Technology(ICT) systems are used only for appropriate purposes, we expect all staff and media group of the church to adhere to this policy both on church premises and their own time.

Introduction

This policy should be read alongside church policies and procedures on Whistleblowing: Disciplinary action, Complaints, Anti- bullying; and the overarching Safeguarding Policy and Procedures.

The Policy and Procedures that it underpins apply to all Staff,PCC(Church Trustees), paid staff(if any), volunteers and anyone working on behalf of the church

“Social Media” is the broad term used for the set of online tools, websites and interactive media that enables users to interact with each other in various ways.

St. John's Church, Killingworth wishes to ensure that use of social media does not expose the church to security risks or reputational damage.

St. John's Church Social Media - Acceptable Policy

Aims of the Policy :

- To provide staff and volunteers with overarching principles that guide to e- safety and so they do not put themselves into a vulnerable position when using social media.
- To protect children and young people who receive Church's services and who make use of social media and information technology(such as mobile phones/ devices, game consoles and the internet) as part of their involvement with us.
- Ensure church information is secure and not compromised.
- Ensure Church's reputation is not damaged or adversely affected.
- Ensure that young people and third parties are protected.

This policy applies to the use of social media for both church business and personal purposes, whether during working hours or otherwise, and regardless as of whether social media is accessed using public equipment or personal equipment.

Breach of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

Disciplinary action may be taken regardless of whether Church equipment or facilities are used for committing the breach. Any member of the Church suspected of committing a breach of this policy will be required to co-operate with the Church PCC(Trustees) investigation, which may involve handing over relevant passwords and login details.

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Staff of the Church will be required to remove internet and / or social media postings which are deemed to constitute a breach of this policy. Failure to comply with such a request may result in disciplinary action.

Employees Responsibilities

- Responsibility for monitoring and reviewing the operation of this policy
- Making recommendations for change to minimise risks
- Ensuring that the policy makes meets legal requirements
- Reflects best practice lies with the PCC(Trustees) of St.John's Church, Killingworth

All members of the church are responsible for the success of this policy and should ensure that they take time to read and understand it .

Any misuse of social media or breach of this policy should be reported to the PCC(Trustees) through the PCC secretary or Incumbent.

St. John's Church, Killingworth will ensure this policy is accessible to all members of staff, volunteers (Media Team) and incorporate in induction information.

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St. John's Church will periodically review and update the policy and any significant changes will be communicated accordingly.

Regulations

Members should note the following regulations on personal internet presence.

- Use a personal email address and not your church email address.
- You are reminded to set your personal settings on social media sites to ensure inappropriate information is not put into the public domain by mistake.
- You should not use your site to attack or abuse colleagues ,church members young people/ children or third party organisations with whom the church is actively engaged.
- You should respect the privacy and feelings of others and be aware that making comments about certain personal characteristics could constitute harassment under the Equality Act 2010 and that you could face prosecution under that or other legislation .
- You should not include contact details or pictures etc. of other members of staff, or children or young people without prior permission. Remember if you break the law on your site(for example by posting something defamatory), you will be personally responsible.

Staff Members

- You must take personal responsibility for your social media content. If you can be identified as working for the Church, you must make sure your profiles, and anything you post, are congruent with how the Church expects you to present yourself to colleagues and other members.

- You must be mindful that even if you don't name the Church as your employer, people who know you and where you work/ volunteer(media group) may still make an unwelcome association with the church. If you are in any doubt as to what is and is not acceptable , this must be discussed with your line manager.
- You must protect Church's interests and you must not publish anything that could directly or indirectly damage these or compromise the Church's reputation.
- You must always show respect to others when using social media. You must never criticise or make defamatory comments about the church or anybody else you come into contact with professionally.
- You must not do anything that could be considered discriminatory against, or bullying or harassment of, any individual, for example by:

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1. Making offensive or derogatory comments relating to age, disability, gender reassignment, marital or partnership status, race, religion/ belief or non- belief, sex or sexual orientation, or any other distinction .
 2. Use social media to bully another individual .
 3. Post images that are discriminatory or offensive or links to such content.
- If you think something on your site gives rise to concerns about a conflict of interest and, in particular, concerns about impartiality or confidentiality this must be discussed with your line manager .
 - Do not reveal confidential information about the Church, it's staff, members or its intellectual property. This might include aspects of Church Policy or details of internal discussions. Consult your line manager(Incumbent) if you are unclear about what might be confidential.
 - If someone from the media or press contacts you about posts on your site which relate to the Church you should discuss it with your line manager (Incumbent) and check the Church's Media Policy.
 - If someone offers to pay for site content this could constitute a conflict of interest and you must consult with your line manager(Incumbent).
 - Where you have political views, Church colleagues are free to express political views in support of and against particular parties and to engage in political campaigning provided that:
 1. Any social media posting makes it clear that such views are their own personal opinions and not the position of the Church.
 2. Such activity does not take place in work time or using church resources, including but not limited to computer equipment, social media feeds or email addresses.
 3. The church's staff communications channels are not used to disseminate such political views.
 - You should not update your personal site during paid working time, unless such activities form part of a work related activity.

Social Media and Young People / Children

As an organisation working with young people we acknowledge the impact and involvement that social networking & messenger sites/ apps such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and WhatsApp have on the lives of young people and their role in the ways which young people interact with each other. There is a huge potential for these tools to be used by youth workers to communicate activities with young people, to encourage them in their faith and to play a part in the discipleship of young people beyond face - to - face groups.

At the same time, we acknowledge the dangers and potential risks that these sites can pose to both young people and youth workers and have the potential to be abused as ways of interfacing with young people. Therefore as an organisation any youth worker using social networking as part of their ongoing work with young people must abide by the following guidelines to safeguard both workers and young people involved.

Guidelines for using Social,Networking with Young People

Use of Messages & Communication with Individuals

All social networks allow private messaging to take place between friends. There are times when one-to-one communication is appropriate however we would strongly advise that any one-to-one communication using social media is kept to a minimum and that it is done via a platform that keeps a record of these messages(ie Facebook messenger) and is ideally done using a specific work account.

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When using social networks to communicate with young people the Church Staff will :

- Use a separate, designated Social Media account for the purposes of the youth organisation. This account may be examined by the PCC (Trustees)/ Line Manager, Incumbent and should be used for Youth purposes only and not as a workers personal account.
- Any communication using Social Media accounts should be kept public or kept logged. Messages should be saved and kept (both incoming and outgoing).
- All contact with young people using Social Media should be kept appropriate and not use abbreviations/ language that could be misunderstood by a parent or guardian (e.g.LOL,IDK(I don't know) and emojis).
- Staff must not use their account after 10.00pm in order to maintain a safe boundary between work and personal life.
- All communications with young people on social media should be done with parental consent .

Specific Site Guides

Facebook

We highly recommend that young people are only added to a specific work Facebook account with parental consent. This will be done by adding a tick box to the regular Youth consent form. Facebook has a function that allows a download of an archive of your profile. This will be done periodically to enable the Church to have a local copy.

Messaging on Facebook is typically logged which means a record of individual and group messages are automatically kept. When using group messages, a minimum of two adults will be part of the message.

In all communications with young people using social networking sites it is advisable to not use abbreviations(for example: lol) as these can often be misinterpreted by parents.

If you are concerned about a young person from their posts on a social media network the you should seek further advice from the Child Protection Advocate at your church and consult your safeguarding policy.

WhatsApp

WhatsApp can be a great tool for creating group messages between young people however when doing this, parental permission will be sought first.

****At least 2 Youth Workers will be part of a WhatsApp group chat.****

When using WhatsApp group chats, adding people to the group discloses their mobile number to the rest of the group.Parents/ Carers will be notified of this.

WhatsApp allows a backup of chats and this will be done periodically to enable the Church to have a local copy.

Twitter. - now called X

The public nature of the majority of twitter profiles means that young people can freely choose to follow other users on the platform. It also means they can freely choose to follow them back. If the

Church uses a public twitter account or one specifically for youth work, all content must be appropriate(I.e. a good witness) and there will only be replies to young people when absolutely necessary .
If Twitter is used, only public communication will used as much as possible as the direct message isn't easy to back up or keep a log of.

Instagram

The Church Instagram will be used for the purpose of sharing photos only, rather than using messaging features as these are difficult to keep a backup. Permission from parents will be sought before sharing photos of young people.

Snapchat

This is not appropriate for use with young people as messages disappear after a designated time

(Taken from Church Office Documents).

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