

St Nicholas' Allestree - Social Media and WhatsApp User Policy

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1. Introduction

Today social media and the internet have become an increasing influence on many people's lives. For many younger people it may have become a primary source for gaining information about the world around them and networking with friends and acquaintances. Used responsibly social media and the internet can be of benefit to the church, providing the opportunity for networking, getting to know people, gaining and sharing information about church events, learning about the Christian Faith, and spreading the Gospel.

Social media is faster, cheaper and arguably more widely available than traditional media however our understanding of confidentiality, responsibility and Christian witness must remain the same. Social media needs to be used responsibly. The C of E have produced specific social media policies to protect children in our church together with guidance on the appropriate use of social media / e-media within the Parish. The social media policy below is based on these Guidelines.

2. General Guidelines

If you comment on any aspect of the work of the Church of England, Diocese of Derby, or Parish of St Nicks you must clearly identify yourself.

Users are personally responsible for the content they publish on-line, whether in a blog, social computing site or any other form of user generated media. Be mindful that what you publish may be public for an indefinite period of time. Protect your privacy and take care to understand a site's terms of service.

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Respect copyright

- Respect libel and defamation laws.
- Never provide details of confidential matters or the performance of groups such as the PCC or its sub committees.
- Do not cite or reference individuals without their approval. If you are telling a story about a third party, ask yourself, “is this my story to tell?”
- When you do make a reference, link back to the source. Don't publish anything that might allow inferences to be drawn that could embarrass or damage an individual.
- Respect your audience. Don't use ethnic slurs, personal insults, obscenity, or engage in any conduct that would not be acceptable in a Christian environment.
- Don't use Church, Diocesan or Church of England logos or trademarks unless approved to do so. If you do use them, please obtain the correct permissions and follow brand guidelines.

3. Confidentiality

The blurring of the boundary between public and private is probably more of a concern to older generations than the younger. Younger people have grown up in an environment of on-line sharing, where they may well publish moans and groans about teachers, parents, friends or the workplace on a social networking site. In the past, these things may have been restricted to a private conversation. Whilst one group may struggle to understand why private information is being shared so publicly, the other may regard it as normal. This may create tensions that will need understanding, especially with groups such as Youth Workers.

Respecting confidentiality should not be problematic in this area. The existence of social media does not change the Church's understanding of confidentiality. Within the life of the Church, there are private or closed meetings, private conversations and confidential matters. All involved have a right to expect others will respect that confidentiality. Breaking confidentiality in social media is as wrong as it would be in any other context. If a confidence is broken, it can spread via social networking with alarming speed and will be impossible to retract. It may be prudent therefore, to ensure those attending sensitive meetings or briefings understand the restrictions placed upon the sharing of that information.

4. Uploading photographs and videos.

- Photographs and video should never be taken during church services without the permission of the service leader.
- Photographs and video should never be uploaded without the permission of the individuals involved.
- Photographs and video should never be uploaded which could misrepresent, embarrass, or compromise the individuals involved.
- Do not photograph, video children without following the Social Media Child protection policy below.

5. Friends and followers

Social networking sites are often based around the idea of “friends” or “followers”. Depending on the privacy settings selected, postings can be viewed by a select audience or by the world! Some people have high friendship or follower figures as a goal, and they may therefore, befriend others who in real life would not be actual friends. Care should be taken to ensure the appropriate privacy settings are selected. If unsure it may be better to communicate more directly using media such as email.

6. Social Media Child Protection Policy.

We appreciate that we live in a constantly changing world of technology which is becoming more sophisticated and we therefore have to be aware of the implications this brings. Whilst children and young people may appear technologically competent, they do not necessarily have the maturity to understand the dangers they may be exposed to. It is important that children and young people understand and stay safe and the guidance should be followed:

- Ensure all electronic communications are appropriate and professional. If using e-technology as a group activity, ensure that an adult worker knows and understands what is happening within the group.
- Communication between children and adults by whatever method should always take place within clear and explicit boundaries. This includes face to face contact, mobile phones, text messaging, emails, digital cameras, videos, webcams, websites, social media sites, and blogs.
- No images or video footage should ever be permitted in an area of personal privacy e.g. toilet or sleeping quarters.
- At camp or sleepovers, all mobile phones, cameras and video equipment will be collected by the group leader at a specified time prior sleep, stored in a secure place and given back to the young person in the morning. This is to prevent sleep disruption and inappropriate images being taken.
- Designated youth workers should be provided with a basic mobile phone supplied by the PCC.
- Adults should not give their personal contact details to children or young people, including their mobile telephone number and details of any blogs or personal websites.
- Do not make any relationship with a child (other than family members) through a social networking site. Only make contact with children for professional reasons, making sure that their parent/guardian has given permission.
- Maintain a log of any electronic contact with an individual regarding all matters or subjects that fall outside of the normal 'day to day' youth work contact.

7. Specific Policy for clergy of St Nicks

For the purpose of this section , "the Organisation" includes the Church of England or Diocese of Derby.

- If you comment on any aspect of the work of the organisation or any policy issue for the organisation, you must clearly identify yourself as a member of the clergy within the organisation in your postings or blog site(s).
- When leaving comments on other blogs or posts, if the original subject is related to the Church of England or the Diocese of Derby then the person posting their comment must identify themselves and their connection with the Church of England or the Diocese.
- It is your responsibility to be aware of and to follow the Diocese of Derby's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy. This includes the transmission and publication of images of young people. Please contact the Diocesan Safeguarding team for advice or with any concerns.
- You must be clear about who you are. When discussing topics relevant to the Church of England or the Diocese of Derby, you must use your real name. If you have a vested interest in something you are discussing, be the first to point it out. Protect yourself and your privacy.
- By virtue of identifying yourself as a member of the clergy, within a social network, you are nurturing connection with your colleagues and the global Christian community. You must ensure that content associated with you is consistent with your work and the Christian values of love, tolerance and forgiveness.

Those who fail to take the Diocesan Policy into account may face disciplinary measures.

8. Specific Policy for employees of St Nicks

For the purpose of this section , “the Organisation” includes the Church of England or Diocese of Derby.

- If you comment on any aspect of the work of the organisation or any policy issue for the organisation, you must clearly identify yourself as a paid employee of the organisation in your postings or blog site(s), and respond in line with the views of the organisation. If you wish to raise concerns about the work or policies within the organisation, your line manager is the appropriate channel.
- Should the comment be about a hobby or non-work related topic then clearly there is no potential for professional bias coming into play and hopefully no conflict of interest.
- When leaving comments on other blogs or posts, if the original subject is related to the Church of England or the Diocese of Deby, then the person posting their comment must identify themselves and their connection with the Church of England or the Diocese.
- An ‘official’ account (naming a team, project or work area) of the Diocese of Derby on any social media website may only be set-up with written consent from a line-manager.
- It is your responsibility to be aware of and to follow the Diocese of Derby’s Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy. This includes the transmission and publication of images of young people. Please contact the diocesan Safeguarding team for advice or with any concerns.
- You must be clear about who you are when discussing topics relevant to the Church of England or the Diocese of Derby, you must use your real name. If you have a vested interest in something you are discussing, be the first to point it out. Protect yourself and your privacy.
- By virtue of identifying yourself as an employee of the Diocese within a social network, you are nurturing connection with your colleagues and the global Christian community. You must ensure that content associated with you is consistent with your work and the Christian values of love, tolerance and forgiveness.

Paid employees, including members of the clergy who fail to take the Diocesan Policy into account may face disciplinary measures.

9. WhatsApp

WhatsApp is a very useful tool that both the congregation and ministry team can use both personally and officially. This social app is a useful tool to pass on information, share thoughts, prayers, comments and organise events.

However, with all the features WhatsApp offers, if a group is not properly managed it could have the potential to breach people’s privacy. As a result, the following specific WhatsApp guidelines are given to ensure every official St Nick’s WhatsApp group or broadcast adheres to and continues to meet GDPR requirements.

What is the difference between ‘personal’ WhatsApp groups and ‘official’ St Nick’s WhatsApp groups?

Sometimes members of the congregation and / or members of the church ministry team may set up a personal WhatsApp group that could include other people from the St Nick’s congregation. In these situations, St Nick’s are not responsible for the running, privacy or management of these groups, even if the group discusses St Nick’s related content. If a personal group has been set up and you would not like to be in it, you have the right to leave that group at any time.

Official St Nick's WhatsApp groups are defined as a group that has been created by the church specifically to communicate church related information (including events or prayer). The group will be managed by a member of the church ministry team and will adhere to the below guidelines.

St Nick's Allestree WhatsApp Group Guidelines

St Nick's will only create a group in order to communicate church related information. You have right to leave the group at any time and can contact the administrator directly to request to not be added to any future groups.

There are 2 types of groups that St Nick's could add you to:

- A broadcast group
- An interactive group

Both group types have its own guidelines, in order to ensure your privacy is protected. These specifics are outlined below:

1. Guidelines specifics for a broadcast group

In most circumstances when a group is created solely for St Nick's communications purposes, we will set up a WhatsApp broadcast group, so that only the administrator can pass on information. No group member can comment or participate in this type of group. Once the group has been set up, the administrator will inform you of the purpose of this group. The administrator has the right to remove members without warning should the person no longer be part of the congregation or relevant to the content being shared.

Only the administrator can add people to the broadcast. If you think another member of the congregation should be part of this group, please let the administrator know.

A broadcast group will be shut down when it is no longer needed, which will be determined by the administrator or another member of the church leadership team.

2. Guidelines specifics for an interactive group

In some circumstances an interactive WhatsApp group will need to be created. An interactive WhatsApp group is your standard type of group, where members can comment and ask questions to the group.

Once a group of this nature has been set up, the administrator will then inform you the purpose of this group. An example of this type of group could be an official St Nick's prayer group where members can share prayer requests so that the other group members can pray.

Due to the nature of interactive groups, there is the potential for sensitive data to be shared by the members of the group.

An administrator will communicate this information upon the original creation of this interactive group.

Only the administrator can add people to an interactive group. If you think another member of the congregation should be part of this group, please let the administrator know.

An interactive group will be shut down when it is no longer needed, which will be determined by the administrator or *another member of the church leadership team* or the PCC.

10. Contact Details

If you have any questions about this policy document , including any requests to exercise your legal rights, please contact the Church Administrator in the St Nicholas church office on 01332 550431 or email stnicksallestree@outlook.com.

You can contact the Information Commissioners Office on 0303 123 1113 or via email <https://ico.org.uk/global/contact-us/email/> or at the Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF

Agreed by 