



## Intro

*As members of the family of Jesus Christ in the parish of Keynsham who find themselves in a world of increasing methods of communication, it is important to see how we can use the opportunities of all forms of media to the glory of Jesus Christ and the building up of our fellowship. We also need to avoid the pitfalls of our world today, and so this policy will help us to avoid those pitfalls.*

## 1. Background

This policy offers guidance on how we communicate, both within the parish and to the outside world. It is guidance about all forms of communication, and most especially with the written word or recorded image. It is primarily concerned with:

- 1) **How individuals communicate on behalf of the Parish of Keynsham or any of its constituent parts.** (These parts include for example a church such as St John's Church, a church organisation such as Kidzone or a church affiliated organisation such as a Toddler Group).
- 2) **How an individual communicates in respect of their relationship as an employee of the parish, office holder (e.g., churchwarden), or leader of an affiliated group (e.g. Mothers' Union, Bellringers) of the Parish of Keynsham or any of its constituent parts.** This will mean when communicating from within the position of their role (e.g., Parish Youth Worker communicating with the youth and their parents), or concerning their role (e.g., the electoral roll officer communicating with those seeking to join the roll).

This policy does not constrain individuals from freely expressing their views in their own individual capacity either within the parish or the outside world. Nor does this policy seek to inhibit dialogue, debate or disagreement within the Parish of Keynsham or any of its constituent parts, nor any positive or negative feedback.

It provides guidance for the following individuals:

- Members of the clergy<sup>1</sup>
- Employees of the parish
- Members of the Keynsham Parochial Church Council (PCC) and any of the District Church Councils (DCC)
- Leaders of affiliated groups (e.g., Bellringers, Mothers' Union, Choirs, Toddler Groups, 'Who let the Dad's out?')

It is important for the churches and their affiliated groups to maintain a high profile in the community so people know what about our activities. We do this through the following methods

- Personal contact
- Social media – there are several Facebook accounts
- The parish website
- Press releases
- Posters and flyers

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<sup>1</sup> Clergy have their own 'Guidelines for the professional conduct of the clergy 2015'

As with any organisation we need to ensure all communications issued by the parish contains accurate information and presents wherever possible a positive image of the church.

## **2. Printed publicity**

### **2.1 Posters**

All posters that might be deemed controversial need to be approved by a member of the clergy team. Posters should contain where appropriate the charity number of the parish 1128845 to comply with charity law, e.g., fund raising or event posters. Any posters must contain copyright free images or be used with the permission of the originator of the image.

### **2.2 Use of images**

Any publicity on behalf of the parish must comply with copyright and safeguarding guidance-please refer to the Diocese website for guidance [here](#). Copies of the parish's image consent form can be obtained from the Parish Youth Worker, Children and Families Worker or Parish Office and must be retained within the appropriate records

For information on use of music online and in images see Christian Copyright Licensing International (CCLI) website. Our CCLI number is 5208.

### **2.3 Contact with the press**

All press releases must be authorised by a member of the clergy team, normally a member of the clergy team will be quoted but, in some circumstances, it might be more appropriate for a member of staff or volunteer to be quoted. Any responses to letters, public comments about the parish made in the press will be made by a member of the clergy or their nominated representative. In some circumstances the Diocese Communications team might be involved.

Leaders of affiliated groups, members of staff, church wardens PCC / DCC members should be careful of any opinion in public on behalf of the parish, this includes

- Letters to the press
- Speaking at public meetings
- Interviews in the media

### **2.4 Press enquiries**

Any press enquiries for articles, comments and responses must be referred to the clergy team in the first instance.

## **3. Social media guidelines**

Within our parish community, more and more people are using social media, and we have several Facebook accounts used to host worship, morning prayer and promote activities within the parish. We acknowledge the value of social media as an important missional tool. Through social media we can connect with people where they are and build relationships with those we might struggle to reach through other channels.

Social media is immediate, interactive, public, conversational and open-ended. This sets it apart from other forms of communication and demands a new way of thinking. As well as the many opportunities, users should also be aware of (though not put off by) the associated risks.

These good practice guidelines have been based on the policy of the Bath and Wells Diocese see [Social Media Support - Diocese of Bath and Wells](#)

In order to protect the reputation of the parish, members of the clergy, employees of the parish, members of the PCC and any DCC and leaders of affiliated groups must not post disparaging or defamatory statements about:

- the parish
- any activity, members of the congregation, volunteers or members past or present of any of the churches;
- organisations with whom the churches work including users of the facilities

Staff and leaders should also avoid communications that might damage our reputation, even indirectly. Staff and leaders are personally responsible for what they communicate in social media (as part of their role or on personal sites).

Be aware of safeguarding issues (see below), for example we do not permit tagging (naming) of vulnerable adults or anyone under the age of 18. If in doubt do not publish the post but consult the Parish Safeguarding Officer.

There is no obligation for members of the clergy, employees of the parish, members of the PCC and any DCC and leaders of affiliated groups to link their personal social media to any parish social media account.

Any new Parish/Church accounts should not be set up without the permission of the clergy who may wish to consult the PCC and the Parish Safeguarding Officer. For all accounts under the auspices of the Parish, at least two people must have full editing rights to enable any posts to be corrected. When staff leave the access to the Facebook editing should be removed and a second person given full editing permissions.

On your personal social media account, if you disclose your affiliation as a leader of a group / member of staff of the parish, you must also state that your views do not represent those of the parish. For example, you could state, "The postings on this site are my own and don't necessarily represent the views of the Parish of Keynsham or the Church of England."

Avoid posting comments about sensitive parish related topics, such as our performance, church services (music, theology) or other staff. Even if you make it clear that your views do not represent those of our parish, your comments could still damage our reputation.

If you are uncertain or concerned about the appropriateness of any statement or posting, refrain from making the communication until you discuss it with a member of the clergy. If you see any content in social media that disparages or reflects poorly on the parish or our partners, you should report it to a member of the clergy. All staff, clergy and leaders are responsible for protecting our reputation.

Remember that you must always respect confidentiality and protect confidential information. You should be mindful of Data Protection issues, confidential information includes things such as unpublished details about our work, details of current projects, future projects or financial information.

## **4. Use of email**

### **4.1 General**

Before you send an email (especially about a sensitive subject) consider how a third party might react if they read it. Sometimes it can be better to speak in person or by telephone.

All staff will be issued with a parish email account for use in their work, this enables you to set boundaries keep your work and home life separate. It also reassures recipients that any emails are written in the person's official capacity not in a personal one. Please be aware that in

sending work emails staff are representing the parish and need to be mindful of their content. In any commercial dealings an email agreeing to use a service or product could be construed as a contract.

You should only use the parish email address in your role as a member of staff.

If you maintain a list of members of a group in relation to your work this should be registered with the Parish's Data Protection officer (the Parish Office Manager). You should also ensure that at least one other person has access to this database should the parish need to contact them (e.g., in the event of illness).

Lists of contact details of anyone involved with the parish made during the course of your work are regarded as our confidential information, and as such you will be required to delete all such lists should you finish leading a group or working with the parish.

#### **4.2 Blind copying emails (BCC)**

As a rule of thumb always use BCC when sending emails to groups of people outside the staff groups, unless you are confident that the members of the group have given permission for their email addresses to be shared. There will be exceptions such as PCC or DCC, but if in doubt use blind copy for the email. Listing on the electoral role does not give you permission to publish their email in group emails.

When you leave, you might want to pass your private email / social media details to people who you can then continue to communicate with you through your private email account.

### **5. Communicating with the congregation / groups**

Occasionally letters, emails may need to be sent to specific groups (Homegroups, parents, churchwardens, specific congregations etc). If the subject of these communications deals with any areas, that may be sensitive or controversial, the draft should be sent to a member of the clergy for approval. Examples might include – ceasing a service, changes to times of group meetings, resignations, information regarding a member of staff.

### **6. Safeguarding**

Safeguarding guidance must be considered in all communication, the informality that social media encourages can mean that it might be harder to maintain a professional distance that is required when working with children, young people and the vulnerable. Communicating directly online with someone, for example with private messaging, is like meeting them in private. You're advised to send messages to groups, rather than individuals, or share them publicly.

Please refer to the [Diocesan Safeguarding Policy](#) and *Safeguarding Guidance for use of Facebook and Social Media* on the [Diocesan website](#)

### **7. Stay within the legal framework**

Whilst sharing thoughts and reflections with friends or followers via social media can seem personal and private, it is not. By law, if one or more people can access it, content is classed as published, in the public domain and subject to legislation around libel, defamation, copyright and data protection. If you wouldn't say something in a public meeting or to someone's face or write it in a newspaper or on headed paper – don't say it online.

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