



Social Media Policy

June 21st 2023

The Benefice of Creech St. Michael, Ruishton and Thornfalcon

Definition: For the purposes of this policy 'Social Media' is considered to include websites and other online means of communication that are used by the Benefice to share information and to develop social and professional contacts.

The purposes for the Benefice using social media:

Providing opportunities for networking, gaining and sharing information about church events, learning about the Christian Faith, and spreading the Gospel.

Advantages of the use of social media:

- It increases communications impact, scale, efficiency and immediacy
- Builds relationships and community
- Provides opportunities for participation, collaboration, feedback
- Reaches and connects with new groups where they are communicating
- Enhances learning and generates ideas

Risks of the use of social media:

- The forming of inappropriate relationships
- Making comments that are defamatory, discriminatory or otherwise illegal, intentionally or not
- The breach of confidentiality and gossip
- The blurring of public/private life boundaries
- The use of bullying, harassment and malicious accusations
- Grooming and impersonation

Managing the use of social media in the Benefice:

- PCCs are responsible for approving the social media accounts to be used by the Benefice.
- PCCs will approve who is able to manage Benefice social media accounts and make sure that they are aware of their responsibilities and the purpose of the social media presence.
- Good, strong passwords should be used to secure Benefice social media accounts.

The Benefice of Creech St. Michael, Ruishton and Thornfalcon

The Church of England's Digital Charter

The PCCs of Creech St. Michael, Ruishton and Thornfalcon agree to abide by the Church of England's Digital Charter when using digital means of communication on behalf of the Church as follows:

- **Truth** - we should hold ourselves to high ideals of checking that what we post online is fair and factual.
- **Kindness** - we are all different and that makes the world an interesting place – and at times a challenging one. Think the best of people, whether they share our views or are speaking against them and aim to be constructive in the way we engage.
- **Welcome** - in the language we use and the way we interact. It's easy for Christians to speak in another language using words that those outside the Church might not relate to.
- **Inspiration** - we are called to be witnesses of our faith and to use social media in a way that genuinely engages others.
- **Togetherness** - we are one Church and other members of this Church are our brothers and sisters in Christ. It is crucial we treat those around us in this way.
- **Safeguarding** - if you have any concerns about the wellbeing of children, young people and vulnerable adults, please contact the relevant diocesan safeguarding adviser.
- **Agree to the Church's and Archbishops' social media guidelines**.

Adoption of the Church of England's guidelines for the use of social media

The PCCs of Creech St. Michael, Ruishton & Thornfalcon agree to adopt the Church of England's Social Media Community Guidelines, as set out below, which detail the responsible use of social media.

- **Be safe.** The safety of children, young people and vulnerable adults must be maintained. If you have any concerns, refer the matter to the Rector, Benefice Safeguarding Officer or Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser.
- **Be respectful.** Do not post or share content that is sexually explicit, inflammatory, hateful, abusive, threatening or otherwise disrespectful.
- **Be kind.** Treat others how you would wish to be treated and assume the best in people. If you have a criticism or critique to make, consider not just *whether* you would say it in person, but the tone you would use.
- **Be honest.** Don't mislead people about who you are.
- **Take responsibility.** You are accountable for the things you do, say and write. Text and images shared can be public and permanent, even with privacy settings in place. If you're not sure, don't post it.

The Benefice of Creech St. Michael, Ruishton and Thornfalcon

- **Be a good ambassador.** Personal and professional life can easily become blurred online so think before you post.
- **Disagree well.** Some conversations can be places of robust disagreement and it's important we apply our values in the way we express them.
- **Credit others.** Acknowledge the work of others. Respect copyright and always credit where it is due. Be careful not to release sensitive or confidential information and always question the source of any content you are considering amplifying.
- **Follow the rules.** Abide by the terms and conditions of the various social media platforms themselves. If you see a comment that you believe breaks their policies, then please report it to the respective company.

Additional advice about the use of social media platforms on behalf of the Benefice:

- Know and follow the Benefice *Safeguarding Policy*.
- Be mindful that what you publish will be public for an indefinite period of time. Even if a post or tweet is taken down, there may still be records of it online.
- If the account makes it clear that you are part of the Church of England, the Diocese of Bath & Wells or the Benefice and the parish churches of Creech St. Michael, Ruishton and Thornfalcon be aware that when you write anything you are representing the wider Church.
- Never provide details of confidential matters or the performance of groups such as the PCCs or their sub committees.
- Do not cite or reference individuals without their approval.
- Don't publish anything that might allow inferences to be drawn that could embarrass or damage an individual.
- 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 Benefice Safeguarding Policy.
- 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.
- Respect libel and defamation laws.
- Social media entries may well attract wider media interest in you as an individual. Proceed with caution and remember that you are responsible for your online activities.

The Benefice of Creech St. Michael, Ruishton and Thornfalcon

Social media sites used by the Benefice:

Website: crtbenefice.org.uk hosted by Church Edit
Approved users: Liz Evans, Revd Mullen, Donna Nicholls

Facebook: Creech Ruishton Thornfalcon Churches
Approved users: Revd Mullen, Donna Nicholls

Facebook: AdventWindowsCreechStMichael & AdventWindowsRuishton
Approved users: Emma Tucker, Donna Nicholls

References

Church of England Digital Charter <https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/digital-charter>

Church of England: Social Media Community Guidelines
<https://www.churchofengland.org/terms-and-conditions/our-social-media-community-guidelines>

.