Safeguarding Policy

Promoting a Safer Church:

SBR Best Practice and Guidelines in the Digital Environment

During these unprecedented times of COVID-19, digital technologies and channels present a huge range of opportunities for delivering your work to both existing & new audiences, as we, within this new SBR community, we desire to strive to establish a new way of working 'norm'.

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The purpose of this document is to provide useful guidelines regarding the following, aimed to help you use digital channels to your advantage whilst protecting yourself, your context/work/ministry, and your audience:

- **The Use of Social Media: Ten Steps to Good Practice**

- **The Use of Zoom: Best Practice**

- **Communicating with Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults**

In addition to this document, reference must be made to the SBR's Online Safety Policy and SBR's Safeguarding Policies. These policies apply to all people who are working (either paid or volunteering) in position of authority on behalf of SBR groups or representing SBR in an official capacity.

These Guidelines are extremely useful and relevant to everyone who share in SBR's ministry.

A. The Use of Social Media: Ten Steps to Good Practice

1) **Relationships:** Social media is all about building relationships. Sharing the right content, through the right channels, at the right time to your audiences.

2) **Digital Identity**: Personal accounts should not be used for SBR's purposes. Use professional accounts set up in the name of your project/setting.

3) **Audience:** Understand the audience who are you trying to connect with;

   i. what are their needs?

   ii. Identify the 'personas' of the different audiences you are wanting to engage with (i.e. regular worshippers, children, youth, older people, new parents, open to faith, etc.).

4) **Communication Channels:** Identify the best channel for engagement: Serving your needs and those of your audience. What technologies can they access; what are their preferences – where do they spend their 'social' time?

5) **Produce a social media plan**:

   i. What are your aims.

   ii. What are you trying to achieve.

   iii. What resources do you have in terms of time and production of content? You need to balance the levels of commitment from you/your team to meet the needs and expectations of your audience.

6) **Manage expectations**: Is your initiative a 'one-off' or regular (specific day/time). Let your users know, this is truly relevant at a time when society at a whole is seeking structure to their time.

7) **Tone & Voice**: Establish your tone of voice so you can be personable, human; an expression of you, SBR and our context. Use a language/terminology appropriate to your audience.

8) **Content:** Generate engaging content: Producing fresh, engaging content tailored to your audience can relate to; do not worry about being polished! Use of imagery, video, and visuals – they drive attention and interaction with your posts. Be mindful of Copyright.

9) **Conversations:** Engage in conversations but please do monitor and respond to all relevant social media conversations (comments/mentions) within your specific platforms; to widen your audience, engage with other relevant social channels to express your voice, expertise, opinion; all about widening your digital 'reach'.

10) **Analytics:** Measure your social success: Look at your metrics; do more of what is working, refine activity which is less successful.

Do not be overwhelmed: Remember quality over quantity! Much better to deliver engaging content over a couple of channels relevant to your audience than trying to embrace too many channels and creating an unmanageable experience for you and & disengaging experience for your audience.

Used appropriately, social media can positively support your work through building community and driving engagement. During these extraordinary times of the Coronavirus

Pandemic, people are looking for positive social spaces and seek structure on a daily basis, reiterating the need to manage expectations.

For Ministry Team and volunteers: We should be aware that whilst using social media for these purposes they are representing SBR and therefore those who use social media as part of their ministry must adhere to the guidelines included within the Social Media policy.

B. The Use of Zoom: Best Practice

a. The videoconferencing platform Zoom has seen its popularity soar world-wide due to its ease of use and simple interface, utilised to building connections, collaboration and for creating many virtual work environments. Given this unprecedent global rise, it has been subject to media & industry criticism regarding its privacy and security.

b. For SBR, it remains an extremely popular platform and applying the following protocols ensures the Host and Participants benefit from an engaging, beneficial, and safe interaction.

c. Meeting ID: Always allow Zoom to create a random meeting ID – as opposed to a personal one.

d. Password: Always generate a password (now a default).

e. Meeting Link and Password: Do not share these details on public platforms i.e. social media. By doing this, you are exposing your meeting to 'Zoombombing'. Only share them with a known audience or specific attendees e.g. to a specific email to a list of known email addresses.

f. Screen Sharing: Unless an essential component of the meeting/session, set the screen sharing to 'Host Only'.

g. Waiting Room – Have a virtual 'waiting room' as a default, so participants cannot join the meeting before the Host and lock the meeting after everyone has joined.

h. Screenshots of meetings/event – Do not publicly share screenshot visuals of a session of social media. Do not take photos, where young people are involved.

i. Background: Consider your background, is it distracting to participants, is your lighting good – does it facilitate positive virtual engagement.

j. Etiquette: When you are not speaking, 'mute' yourself to minimise background noise, ensuring a clearer meeting for participants. As the host, you are able to mute all participants if you need to.

k. Sharing Resources: Use the 'Chat' facility to share documents and links between participants during the meeting. As the Host, make sure you capture any details which may need to be shared beyond the meeting.

l. Recording the Session: This is a useful tool, but out of courtesy advise participants you are doing so. When involving children, young people, or vulnerable adults, unless in compelling circumstances, do not record the session (unless you have gained parental consent).

C. **Communicating with Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults**

For many young people, digital communications and especially social media are a positive and enjoyable aspect of their lives and should be a safe place for engagement, so as you reach out to engage with this audience try not to treat this digital world as 'scary'.

SBR acknowledges that the use of text messages and email-as well as online communication such as Facebook (including Messenger), Twitter and WhatsApp, are common methods used for communicating with those involved in our ministry and groups in order to reach participants most effectively.

1) However, there should be clear boundaries in place for any communication between those representing SBR and those that we work and engage with; and it is expected that communication is transparent regardless of the method and the following best practice is adhered to, applying the same approach as in a physical interaction/setting.

2) Social Media Accounts: Setup accounts with 2/3 Admin Users from your context/setting who can log in to check activity/messages and to act as moderators for activity. Our SBR Facebook account and pages have named persons with the role of an administrator.

3) Personal Accounts: Do not use personal social media accounts to contact children, young people, and vulnerable adults. Always use a professional account. In the case of Facebook, do not allow children, young people, and vulnerable adults to be Friends' with personal accounts of group leaders/SBR staff.

4) Facebook Accounts: Use this account page for youngsters to follow/like. @StMichaelWithStPaulWallington

5) Conversations: Conduct all conversations in the public section of your page/social media presence. Avoid direct messaging.

6) Activity Log: Keep a shared activity log to track engagement amongst administrators.

7) Parental Consent: Always gain parental consent (by email) before initially contacting anyone under the age of 18 and do not contact anyone who you know or think may be under the age of 13. Contact our Safeguarding Officers and discuss gaining parental consent for the use of photos and other content generated.

8) Platform Age Limits: Many of the popular platforms have a minimum age of 13 years, so when engaging with children, young people and vulnerable adults, the relationship should be with the parent/carer on behalf of the child, young person, or vulnerable adult. This allows not only parental involvement in the social space but is crucial in adhering to safeguarding protocol.

9) Photos: Store all photos collated through social media activity in a shared access area within your setting, not in a personal file on you PC/Phone.

10) Devices: Where possible, use SBR devices for all communications that are communicated to agreed platforms (Facebook, WhatsApp) or channels (YouTube). Where this is not an option, the device you use should be personal to you and not accessible by others.

11) Group/Session Management: Define who will be part of the group / activity you are establishing. Who manages who joins? See Zoom guide as an example.

12) Session Protocol: Create a set of social community guidelines' – what is acceptable behaviour/what isn't, what is the purpose of the session? Involve some of the youngsters to help steer this – helps give them shared ownership and reiterates creation of a 'safe space'. Make these guidelines easily accessible. Work out what the procedure is if someone goes against these guidelines. Be prepared to mute/block inappropriate behaviour.

13) Personal Details: Only give personal contact details to children, young people and vulnerable adults that are within the public domain of SBR, including your mobile telephone number. If in doubt, discuss with our Safeguarding Officers.

14) Tone and Voice: In communications, use an appropriate tone: friendly, but not over-familiar or personal. Be warm, but do not suggest or offer a special relationship. Be careful how you sign off: consider, for instance, how 'love' and 'XXX' might be perceived and misinterpreted by children, young people, and vulnerable adults. Be guarded in your communications with children, young people, and vulnerable adults to avoid any possible misinterpretation of your motives or any behaviour which could be construed as grooming

15) Platform/Channel Utilisation: ensure you respond well to young people through the media they have chosen and assess whether it is the most appropriate media for the nature of the communication. Consider whether it would be better to fix a time to communicate face to face (virtually), during or following the activity.

16) One-to-One Interaction: With the exception of specific activities which require one-to-one interaction of which specific protocol and consensual guidelines are in place, avoid one-to-one interaction via Video Conferencing. Always be supported by a member of your group who have DBS clearance.

17) Confidentiality: Respect the children, young people, and vulnerable adult's confidentiality unless abuse is suspected or disclosed. Store e-mail, and WhatsApp/text messages for as long as possible by using the archive function. If a message contains anything which causes concern, print it out give to our Safeguarding Officer.

18) Sharing of Information: Be clear and explicit about information that you need to share; do not abbreviate or short-cut your communications. Do not share any personal information with children, young people and vulnerable adults, or request or respond to any personal information from children, young people, and vulnerable adults, other than that which might be appropriate as part of your role.

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