



St Hilda's Ashford

Social Media Policy

INTRODUCTION

St Hilda's Ashford uses the following social media: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube.

POLICY FOR CHURCH MEMBERS

1. You are a representative of the church and an ambassador. If you are ordained, lead in or are employed by the Church, others will see you in your public role as a representative of the Church. If talking about a church matter, make it clear that these are your personal opinions and not those of S Hilda's Ashford, the Church of England or the diocese.
2. Consider setting up different accounts for ministry and personal use to help set definite boundaries. Use privacy settings wisely.
3. If you do express your views on your own private social media platforms, please state 'views are my own'.
4. Nothing that you put in the public domain is private.
5. Never publish detailed personal information such as your address or telephone number, unless in a private message to someone you know and trust.

CHILDREN, YOUTH & VULNERABLE ADULTS

6. Do not communicate with youth or children online, for example using private messages.
7. Consider carefully whether to accept friend requests from young people (under 18) or vulnerable people and in no circumstance should you initiate a request with a vulnerable person. Seek advice from staff and ask for permission from their parents if you would like to accept and keep a copy of any private communication, they try to start with you and do not answer without parent/caretaker permission.
8. Where possible send messages to groups, rather than individuals, young people, or share them publicly.
9. There are different age limits on social media platforms. We will be careful to use platforms for youth which they are not old enough to use, and which could expose them to content not suitable for their age.

ADMIN ACCESS TO SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS

10. There are limited admins for social media accounts, for example those who are the only authorized persons who can use social media on behalf of the Parish.
11. All posts to St Hilda's Ashford accounts should be in line with the views of the parish.
12. Do not delete private message exchanges in case of accusations from others.
13. We will turn off the comments function on YouTube.
14. We will block an account on any platform if we receive hateful, rude or discriminatory messages from them.

CHURCH OF ENGLAND GUIDANCE

Don't rush in

The immediacy of social media is one of its benefits – we can respond quickly to questions, correct misunderstandings, give our perspective about a breaking story in the news media. Responding quickly doesn't mean doing so without due consideration. Before posting always think:

- Is this my story to share?
- Would I want my Mother to read this?
- Would I want God to read this?
- Would I want this on the front page of a newspaper?

This point applies even before you start posting your own content. Spend a while listening to others, getting a feel for the tone in that particular forum, giving thought to how you might participate.

Transient yet permanent

Social media updates are immediate and will outdate quickly BUT they can have a more lasting impact and you should assume that anything you post is permanent and will be shared with others. Even if you delete it later on, it may have been seen and re-published or referred to elsewhere.

Blurring of public and private lives

Whether you like it or not, as a member of the church anything you do or say in the public domain will be interpreted by the public as being representative of the church – even if you feel you are speaking in a personal capacity rather than an official one. ^[L]_[SEP]Be aware that any controversial or sensitive comments you make may attract attention of the media.

Safeguarding

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 him or her in private. Make sure you communicate appropriately with young and be aware of the risks to them of online bullying.

Be sensitive to confidentiality and the risk of intrusion

When telling a story about a situation, which involves someone else, always ask yourself *Is this my story to tell?* – Would it cause distress, inconvenience, upset or embarrassment to others if they found out you had shared in this way? If in any doubt, do not share it online (even if you change details). Make sure you are not the source of confidential information leaking out.

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.

Be mindful of your own security

Be careful about the personal details you share online – again assuming anything you share about yourself is in the public domain.

Remember the value of other forms of communication!

It can be very easy to hide behind an online persona and neglect other relationships – remember that while social media is an exciting forum, which presents many new opportunities, the value of face-to-face relationships should never be forgotten.

Agreed by PCC:

Signed by the Incumbent:

To be reviewed: March 2023