

Circuit Social Media Policy

Introduction

1. This is good practice guidance for Ministers and other office holders or those with a representative role within the Methodist Church.
2. All new forms of communication provide opportunities to share the Good News of Jesus Christ in the world. They come, however, with new values. Whereas the printed word has a certain finality of declaration about it, social media is interactive, conversational and open-ended. Moreover, it happens in a public, not private, space. The Methodist Church therefore encourages the user to use social tools as a means of engaging in an interactive conversation with people of all faiths and none. As Gospel people, our conversation should be 'seasoned with salt' ([Colossians 4:6](#)), and these guidelines aim to help us to do so.
3. The principles applied to this are:
 1. Be credible. Be accurate, fair, thorough and transparent.
 2. Be consistent. Encourage constructive criticism and deliberation.
 3. Be cordial, honest and professional at all times. Be responsive. When you gain insight, share it where appropriate.
 4. Be integrated. Wherever possible, align online participation with other communications.
 5. Be a good representative of the Methodist Church. Remember that you are an ambassador for Christ, the Church and your part of it. Disclose your position as a member or officer of the Church, making it clear when speaking personally. Let [Galatians 5:22-26](#) guide your behaviour.
 6. Be respectful: respect confidentiality. Respect the views of others even where you disagree.

Policy

4. You should participate online in the same way as you would with other public forums. You take responsibility for the things you do, say or write.
5. Never share personal details like home address and phone numbers except with someone you know and trust, and if you decide to do so then use a private message. Be aware an address can be disclosed in many ways for example via photos or a GPS position as well as in written form.
6. Always remember that participating online results in your comments being permanently available and open to being republished in other media. Once something is posted to a blog or other internet site, it should be assumed to be still available even if it is later deleted from the original site.
7. Stay within the legal framework and be aware that safeguarding, libel, slander, copyright and data protection laws apply, as well as the [Constitutional Practice](#)

and Discipline (CPD) of the Methodist Church.

8. For general guidelines on confidentiality, refer to With Integrity and Skill – if telling a story about anyone, ask yourself **Is this my story to tell?**
9. Be aware that this may attract media interest in you as an individual, so proceed with care whether you are participating in an official or a personal capacity. If you have any doubts, take advice, but remember that you are responsible for your online activities.

General Facebook

- No-one under 13 years should be signed onto your account as a friend as it is facebook policy that 13 years is the appropriate age to hold an account.
- In signing young people to your account consider whether you are solely in a leadership role and therefore should not or whether in a more mixed role, e.g family friend and may proceed with caution.
- Beware of instant chat which has both advantages and disadvantages.

Circuit Youth Facebook Profile

To ensure the safety of the young people and adults whilst using facebook in conjunction with Circuit youth groups

- No adult will be accepted as a member
- Facebook can only be accessed from a work computer or the work mobile used by those who have been authorized to do so by the Circuit Leadership Team.
- Instant chat must not be operated (any breach of this will constitute gross misconduct and could result in dismissal). Facebook messenger may be used as all conversations are recorded and remain available to see.
- The profile will be checked on a weekly basis
- Only the staff and a nominated member of the youth management group will have access to the password to access the page.
- A log will be kept and completed of each and every time a member of staff logs on.
- Use of Facebook will be regularly reviewed

Other social media

Other social media should be carefully considered in light of these guidelines. Media which post publicly, such as Twitter, should be used with consideration to the fact that anything posted is on public view.

Any Twitter account associated with direct projects within the Circuit, for example St Arnold's, are under the control of the member of staff leading that project, and that member of staff is responsible and accountable for anything

posted under that account. If a Circuit Twitter account is set up in the future, the same checks and accountabilities will be put into place as with the Circuit Facebook page

Instant media, such as Snapchat, is not permitted to be used in the context of Circuit work as no record of conversations is kept. Instagram and other image-sharing sites should also be avoided in this context. Live web-cam sites, such as Periscope, are not permitted in the context of Circuit work.

Circuit website

- All content will be directed through the Circuit Office who will review the content for suitability, any issues will be dealt with via staff meeting
- Any photographs can only be uploaded with written consent
- Any young people or adults who may be vulnerable will not be identified in any uploaded photographs
- If events are advertised for young people or adults who may be vulnerable only general details and a contact number will be given.

This policy will be reviewed annually

.....Chair of Circuit Meeting

Dated