Social Media Policy

The Vestry at Holy Trinity church have decided to adopt a social media policy for the benefit of all who are connected to the church. This policy will be supplemented with 'how to guides' worked out by those who are specifically involved with the Social Media Channels that Holy Trinity uses. It will be important for any group who associates itself with Holy Trinity Church activities to be aware of this policy and any guides produced by the Church.

Responsibility for this policy rests with the Rector and Vestry, although activities may be delegated to sub groups as and when social media channels are updated/managed etc. The roles and responsibility for taking appropriate actions will be established as sub groups are formed, or 'administrative roles' assigned.

The **'Social Media and Digital Communications -Guidelines'** published by the Scottish Episcopal Church (SEC) and attached here in full, form the basis of this policy, and must be read as part of the policy. Additional information is added below to ensure that this policy framework is clear for Holy Trinity.

- The term 'social media' should be broadly understood for purposes of this policy to include blogs, wikis, microblogs, message boards, chat rooms, electronic newsletters, online forums, social networking sites, and other sites and services that permit users to share information with others in a contemporaneous manner.
- The Rector will make known any particular perspective on social media that he wishes to be implemented over and above those contained in sections 1-6 in the attached SEC document. This is likely to guide who and how social media channels are linked, either to each other, or to external channels whether within the SEC or not. It is particularly important that attention is drawn to section 6 and that all involved in Social Media Channels follow both SEC and HT safeguarding policy.
- In terms of Section 7 **If in doubt… ask?** The first contact should be with the Rector on rector@holytrinitystirling.org or phone 01786 359821.
- Social media networks, blogs and other types of online content sometimes generate press and media attention or legal questions. Users should refer these inquiries to authorized Church spokespersons (i.e. Rector, Vestry members or delegated sub group members). If users encounter a situation while using social media that threatens to become antagonistic, users should disengage from the dialogue in a polite manner and seek the advice of the Rector.

- Users should get appropriate permission before referring to or posting images of current or former members of the congregation, vendors or suppliers. Additionally, users should get appropriate permission to use a third party's copyrights, copyrighted material, trademarks, service marks or other intellectual property.

Social Media and Digital Communications – Guidelines as published by Scottish Episcopal Church and which form part of Holy Trinity Church's policy -found on SEC website

Introduction

These Guidelines are intended to help clergy and lay employees, office-bearers and representatives of the Scottish Episcopal Church use social media in the most effective and appropriate way and to help prevent its misuse.

Social media offers wide opportunity for groups and individuals to engage creatively and positively with others. It is a key way in which we can share stories about our congregations, the Church and the Christian faith as a whole.

At the same time, the nature of social media means it's important to think about how to use it well and to manage the risks to which their use can give rise.

Social Media

Social media technologies and attitudes to it are constantly changing. Current platforms include Facebook, Flikr, Google+, Instagram, LinkedIn, Periscope, Soundcloud, Twitter, WhatsApp, Wordpress and other blogging platforms, Youtube, and many more.

Some of the benefits of social media compared to more traditional forms of communication are its speed, high visibility, a conversational and open-ended tone, the tendency to attract public attention and encouragement of interaction. Social media is faster, cheaper and more widely available than printed media, although potential exclusion issues arise when part of a community lacks internet access.

The speed of social media is both a delight and a danger. As with any communication, things can go wrong and misunderstandings can arise. We hope

these Guidelines will help you to think through the issues around using social media.

1. Exercise courtesy and responsibility

Responsibility

Social media posts can travel across the globe within seconds, and misunderstandings can quite easily occur very quickly. You need to exercise good judgment about what, how and why you are saying something, to whom you are saying it.

Before posting a comment or image on social media, pause to consider the tone of the conversation you are joining, and whether it is appropriate to participate. Ask yourself:

- Would this breach a confidence?
- Would I want this on the front page of a newspaper?
- Would I want my family and friends to read this?
- If it concerns a disagreement, have I tried to resolve it privately first?
- Would I (in the case of clergy and lay readers/leaders in Church) say this from the pulpit or in general to members of my congregation either individually or collectively?
- Is what I'm writing reflective of a Christ-like compassion, even if challenge is present?

Courtesy

Social Media works well for offering praise, encouragement or support, and it's a great way to convey simple, positive messages.

It is important to read as well as comment when using social media. Exercise courtesy and kindness when responding or posting a comment, especially if it concerns an individual. If this is not possible then consider the wisdom of posting a comment or response.

Constructive criticism and challenging certain views can be good but it should be done in a way that does not give rise to insult, offence or hurt towards another person.

If you are in any way unsure about an image or film content that you wish to share please seek the author's permission. Under no circumstances can a

'Googled image' be used to relay a response or highlight a cause without granted permission. If permission has been granted be sure to credit the source. If you are in any doubt – don't.

2. You are the face of the Church

As a clergy person, an office-bearer (volunteer or paid) or an employee of the Scottish Episcopal Church, you will be regarded as a representative of the Church. It is therefore important that the distinction is made between personal and professional comment/opinion on social media and that clear boundaries are in place to ensure such distinctions are both respected and upheld.

You are responsible for everything that you post on social media. You should make it clear when you are posting personal comment/opinion that it is your own personal comment/opinion and not the views of the Church.

However do bear in mind that not everyone will necessarily separate perceptions of the two so your views can potentially be read as those of 'the Church' albeit unofficially.

3. Once you've posted something, it's posted

You should regard all social media posts as public and permanent

Once something is posted online you can't delete it entirely. Even if you delete or retract a post yourself, others may have seen it, shared it and be talking about it.

Particularly in pastoral settings, but also elsewhere, confidential meetings and conversations take place within the Church. The Church's understanding of confidentiality and its importance are unaltered by social media. Ask yourself: "is this story mine to share and/or to share widely?" If you are at all uncertain - don't.

4. Normal Rules apply

You are responsible for ensuring that your posts are appropriate.

Legislation including defamation, copyright and data protection applies to digital and online communication as much as it does to print communication. If you are unsure about whether something could potentially be challenged in this way then seek advice before posting a comment/image.

Canonical provisions and guidelines concerning the conduct of clergy apply to digital and online communication as they do in any other setting. Similar considerations apply to employees and other representatives.

5. Tell people who you are

Don't hide behind a pseudonym or alias. For personal accounts, if your username or profile on a social media platform does not include your real name, provide some brief details in the 'About' section. When you create a profile page for a congregation, identify the person who is responsible for the content posted within it and provide contact details.

That said, you should manage your privacy settings carefully, and not divulge personal information unless you are sure you can trust that this will not be misused.

6. Safeguarding

The use of social media is open to different interpretations and perceptions of what is and is not appropriate behaviour. The transmission of words, sounds, image (video and still images) has the potential to be harmful in a safeguarding sense and it is therefore important that when communicating online with children, young people or vulnerable adults it is done so with care and sensitivity. Detailed guidelines have been produced by the Committee for Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults and can be accessed on the Scottish Episcopal Church website http://www.scotland.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/Guidance-on-Social-Media.pdf

7. If in doubt, ask

We're here to help! If you have questions or concerns about the use of social media you can contact The Director of Communications on press@scotland.anglican.org or call 0131 225 6357.