



Romford BAPTIST CHURCH

Social Media-Acceptable Use Policy

Policy Statement

The internet provides unique opportunities for the volunteers, paid staff, trustees and non-paid leaders to promote activities and events, share information and participate in interactive discussions on particular topics using a wide variety of social media, such as:

- Facebook
- X (formerly Twitter)
- Instagram
- WhatsApp
- YouTube
- MailChimp

We actively encourage staff of Romford Baptist Church to use these mediums but we also recognise that use of social media can potentially pose risks to Romford Baptist Church confidential information and reputation, and can jeopardise its compliance with legal obligations.

To minimise these risks, to avoid loss of productivity and to ensure that Romford Baptist Church Information and Communications Technology (ICT) systems are used only for appropriate purposes, we expect all staff of Church to adhere to this policy both on the Church premises and in their own time.

Introduction

This policy should be read alongside Church's policies and procedures on Whistleblowing; Disciplinary action; Complaints; Anti-bullying; and the overarching Safeguarding Policy and Procedures.

The policy and the procedures that it underpins apply to all staff, including Trustees, Elders, paid staff, volunteers, interns and anyone working on behalf of Church.

"Social Media" is the broad term used for the set of online tools, websites and interactive media that enable users to interact with each other in various ways.

Romford Baptist Church wishes to ensure that use of social media does not expose the Church to security risks or reputational damage.



Aims of the policy

The aim of the policy is to:

- to provide staff and volunteers with the overarching principles that guide to e-safety and so they do not put themselves in a vulnerable position when using social media
- to protect children and young people who receive Church's services and who make use of social media and information technology (such as mobile phones / devices, games consoles and the Internet) as part of their involvement with us
- ensure Church information remains secure and is not compromised
- ensure Church's reputation is not damaged or adversely affected
- young people and third parties are protected

This policy applies to the use of social media for both business and personal purposes, whether during working hours or otherwise, and regardless of whether the social media is accessed using Church equipment, public equipment or personal equipment.

Breach of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. Disciplinary action may be taken regardless of whether the breach is committed during working hours, and regardless of whether Church equipment or facilities are used for the purpose of committing the breach. Any member of the Church suspected of committing a breach of this policy will be required to co-operate with the Church Trustees investigation, which may involve handing over relevant passwords and login details.

Staff of the Church will be required to remove internet and/or social media postings which are deemed to constitute a breach of this policy. Failure to comply with such a request may result in disciplinary action.

Employee Responsibilities

Responsibility for monitoring and reviewing the operation of this policy, making recommendations for change to minimise risks and ensuring that the policy meets legal requirements and reflects best practice lies with the Trustees of Romford Baptist Church.

All members of the Church are responsible for the success of this policy and should ensure that they take the time to read and understand it.

Any misuse of social media or breach of this policy should be reported to the Minister – Team Leader via email address: info@romfordbaptist.org.uk.



Romford Baptist Church will ensure this policy is accessible to all members of staff and incorporate in induction information.

Romford Baptist Church will periodically review and update the policy and any significant changes will be communicated accordingly.

Regulations

Members of staff

- You must take personal responsibility for your social media content. If you can be identified as working for the Church, you must make sure your profiles, and anything you post, are congruent with how the Church expects you to present yourself to colleagues and other members. You must be mindful that even if you do not name the Church as your employer, people who know you and where you work may still make an unwelcome association with the church. If you are in any doubt about what is and is not acceptable, this must be discussed with your line manager.
- You must protect Church's interests and you must not publish anything that could directly or indirectly damage these or compromise the Church's reputation.
- You must always show respect to others when using social media. You must never criticise or make defamatory comments about the Church, young people/children, your colleagues, members of the church or anybody else you come into contact with professionally.
- You must not do anything that could be considered discriminatory against, or bullying or harassment of, any individual, for example by:
 - a. making offensive or derogatory comments relating to age, disability, gender reassignment, marital or partnership status, race, religion/belief or non- belief, sex or sexual orientation, or any other distinction;
 - b. use social media to bully another individual (such as an employee or student of the University) or;
 - c. post images that are discriminatory or offensive or links to such content.
- If you think something on your site gives rise to concerns about a conflict of interest and, in particular, concerns about impartiality or confidentiality this must be discussed with your line manager.
- Do not reveal confidential information about the Church, its staff, members or its intellectual property. This might include aspects of Church policy or details of internal discussions. Consult with your line manager if you are unclear about what might be confidential.



- If someone offers to pay you for site content this could constitute a conflict of interest and you must consult with your line manager.
- If someone from the media or press contacts you about posts on your site which relate to the Church you should refer the matter immediately to the Minister – Team Leader and provide no further comment.
- Where by you have political views, Church colleagues are free to express political views in support of and against particular parties and to engage in political campaigning providing that:
 - a. Any social media posting makes it clear that such views are their own personal opinions and not the position of the Church.
 - b. Such activity does not take place in work time or using church resources, including but not limited to computer equipment, social media feeds, or email addresses.
 - c. The church's staff communications channels are not used to disseminate such political views.
- You should not update your personal site during paid working time, unless such activities form part of a work related activity.

Social Media and Young People/Children

As an organisation working with young people we acknowledge the impact and involvement that social networking & messenger sites/apps such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and WhatsApp have on the lives of young people and their role in the ways which young people interact with each other. There is huge potential for these tools to be used by youth workers to communicate activities with young people, to encourage them in their faith and to play a part in the discipleship of young people beyond face-to-face groups.

At the same time, we acknowledge the dangers and potential risks that these sites can pose to both young people and youth workers and have the potential to be abused as ways of interacting with young people. Therefore as an organisation any youth worker using social networking as part of their ongoing work with young people must abide by the following guidelines to safeguard both workers and young people involved.

Guidelines For Using Social Networking With Young People

Use of Messages & Communication With Individuals

All social networks allow private messaging to take place between 'friends'. There are times when one-to-one communication is appropriate however we would strongly advise that



any one-to-one communication using social media is kept to a minimum and that it is done via a platform that keeps a record of these messages (i.e. Facebook messenger) and is ideally done using a specific work account.

When using social networks to communicate with young people the Church staff will:

- Use a separate, designated Social Media account for the purposes of the youth organisation. This account may be examined by any of the trustees/line manager and should be used for Youth purposes only and not as a worker's personal account.
- Any communication using the Social Media accounts should be kept public or kept logged. Messages should be saved and kept (both incoming and outgoing).
- To provide protection to any individual working with young people as their primary responsibility, the church may arrange to download and electronically store in a shared password protected folder on the church's shared drive, details of messages that have been sent using the church-based messenger services. This will be completed periodically.
- All contact with young people using Social Media should be kept appropriate and not use abbreviations/language that could be misunderstood by a parent or guardian (e.g. LOL, IDK (I don't know) and emojis).
- Staff must not use these account after 10pm in order to maintain a safe boundary between work and personal life.
- All communication with young people on social media should be done with parental consent.

Specific Site Guidelines

Facebook

We highly recommend that young people are only added to a specific work Facebook account with parental consent. This will be done by adding a tick box to the regular Youth consent form. Facebook has a function that allows a download of an archive of your profile. This will be done periodically to enable the Church to have a local copy.

Messaging on Facebook is typically logged which means a record of individual and group messages are automatically kept. When using group messages, a minimum of two adults will be part of this message.

In all communication with young people using social networking sites it is advisable to not use abbreviations (for example: lol) as these can often be misinterpreted by parents.



If you are concerned about a young person from their posts on a social media network then you should seek further advice from the Child Protection advocate at your church and consult your safeguarding policy.

WhatsApp

WhatsApp can be a great tool for creating group messages between young people however when doing this, parental permission will be sought first.

At least 2 Youth Workers will be part of a WhatsApp group chat.

When using WhatsApp group chats, adding people to the group discloses their mobile number to the rest of the group. Parents/carers will be notified of this.

WhatsApp allows a backup of chats and this will be done periodically to enable the Church to have a local copy.

X (formerly Twitter)

The public nature of the majority of twitter profiles means that young people can freely choose to 'follow' other users on the platform. It also means they can freely choose to 'follow' them back. If the Church uses a public twitter account or one specifically for youth work, all content must be appropriate (i.e. a good witness) and there will only be replies to young people when absolutely necessary.

If X is used, only public communication will be used as much as possible as the direct message feature isn't easy to back up or keep a log of.

Instagram

The Church Instagram will be used for the purpose of sharing photos only, rather than using messaging features as these are difficult to keep a backup of. Permission from parents will be sought before sharing photos of young people.

Snapchat

The nature of Snapchat makes it completely inappropriate for use with young people as messages disappear after a designated amount of time. Snapchat is not to be used with any young people.



We are aware of many other social media forums such as Threads, BlueSky, Mastodon and LinkedIn exist and others may exist in the future. Therefore, the principles of this policy also extend to these and any others that are not mentioned here.

Signed: Revd Ian Bunce

Date: 10 February 2025

Next review date: February 2027

Version control

1 – new policy February 2025