



Social Media Policy

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Status of policy: non-contractual

Policy applies to: employees, volunteers and members of St Michael's Church (Stoke Gifford) Parochial Church Council (PCC), the Pre-School & Nursery (PSN) and St Michael's Church Centre (SMCC.) Those involved in Children's and Youth Work should use this policy in conjunction with the Communications and Social Media section of the St Michael's Church Safeguarding Policy

Social Media Policy

1. Introduction

This policy governs the publication of, and commentary on, social media by employees and representatives (volunteers appointed to specific areas of responsibility) of St Michael's Church Parochial Church Council (PCC) and St Michael's Church Centre Limited.

PCC employees and representatives are free to publish or comment via social media in accordance with this policy.

2. Terms and references

For the purposes of this policy, social media is any type of interactive online media that allows parties to communicate instantly with each other or to share data in a public forum. This includes online social forums such as Facebook, microblogs such as Twitter, CV sharing sites such as LinkedIn, video and image-sharing websites and similar facilities. These may also be referred to as social networking sites.

Similar principles should be applied to the use of blogs, WhatsApp group conversations and group email conversations.

Social media is a constantly evolving area of digital information transfer. The principles of this policy are to be applied to any form of social media that is used.

This policy is in addition to any existing policies regarding the use of technology, computers, email and the internet. In particular please refer to the Data Protection and Digital Device Policy.

Publication and commentary on social media carries similar obligations to any other kind of publication, or commentary.

3. Social media accounts for St Michael's areas of ministry

If you are setting up any form of social media account or identity for St Michael's or associated ministry, you can obtain assistance/guidance from socialmedia@stmichaelsbristol.org for existing accounts/identity already in place, a review of the settings should be made, so that they are in line with the following.

- All accounts/identities should have more than one administrator (admin). For platforms where multiple admins are not possible, the passwords should be stored centrally and securely with access given to the Church Administrator (socialmedia@stmichaelsbristol.org).
- Access should be given to a line manager, or the Church Administrator.
- Social media identities linked to St Michael's should not be set up without prior approval from a line manager. You should also inform socialmedia@stmichaelsbristol.org.
- Any social media account set up for a St Michael's area of ministry should also "follow" or "like" the main St Michael's accounts (Facebook/Twitter/Instagram) so that a clear link can be seen. If not sure how to do this contact socialmedia@stmichaelsbristol.org.
- When using social media nothing should be said which conflicts with the vision of St Michael's. Ensure that any information given out is correct.
- If posts or comments are received that are contentious, and publicly viewable, seek advice from a line manager before taking any action. It is not always appropriate to engage, but equally is not always appropriate to delete without acknowledging. Always consider that you are representing the ministry of St Michael's and think of the wider implications.

If an event is being publicised, please also ensure it is added as an 'event' on ChurchSuite (the church management system used at St Michael's) which links to the calendar section of www.stmichaelsbristol.org website. This can be done by contacting admin@stmichaelsbristol.org.

4. Social media for personal use

St Michael's recognises that employees and representatives will make use of social media in a personal capacity. Whilst they are not acting directly on behalf of St Michael's, employees and representatives must be aware that there is still the potential to embarrass, damage or discredit St Michael's through their online behaviours. If this were to happen, they could become subject to the Disciplinary Policy.

All employees and representatives should also be mindful of the information they disclose on social media in respect to their personal accounts. All social networking activity takes place, to some degree, in public. Therefore all should be mindful of both the information disclosed on social media, and the manner in which communications are conducted. All employees and representatives should always act in a manner which does not bring St Michael's into disrepute.

An assumption should not be made that anything electronic is secure. Privacy settings on social media do not guarantee that contacts will not pass any comments on outside your trusted circles.

Employees and representatives are allowed to express personal opinions when using social media: however, it should be made clear when an opinion expressed that is different to that of St Michael's stance. A good phrase to include should the occasion arise would be: *"The views I express here are mine alone and do not necessarily reflect the views of St Michael's Church"*. Shortened versions, for space-restricted contexts such as Twitter profiles, can work, eg *"Views may not be my employer's"*.

5. Principles of responsible online communication

Any communications that employees or representatives make in a personal capacity through social media must not:

- breach confidentiality, for example by:
 - revealing confidential intellectual property or information owned by St Michael's
 - giving away confidential information about an individual or organisation (such as a partner institution)
 - discussing internal work processes (eg future business plans)
- do anything that could be considered discriminatory, bullying or harassment of, any individual, for example by:
 - making offensive or derogatory comments relating to sex, gender reassignment, race (including nationality), disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, pregnancy or age
 - using social media to bully another individual (such as an employee or representative of St Michael's)
 - posting images that are discriminatory or offensive or links to such content
- bring St Michael's into disrepute, for example by:
 - criticising or being abusive towards colleagues, or others with close association with St Michael's
 - making defamatory comments about individuals or other organisations or groups
 - posting images that are inappropriate or links to inappropriate content in the context of their employment
- breach the safeguarding policy, for example by;
 - messaging children (those under 18) or adults at risk (defined as those requiring care and support)
 - posting images of children or adults at risk without their/legal guardian's permission

6. Conflict of interest

The following potential areas of conflict of interest should be discussed with the Operations Director.

- If an employee or representative thinks something on their social media gives rise to concerns about a conflict of interest, impartiality or confidentiality.
- If a third party offers payment to produce a blog or microblog for a third party.
- When an employee is contacted by the press about posts on their social media that relate to St Michael's.