



Morpeth Parish

St James the Great + St Mary the Virgin + St Aidan

Morpeth Parish supports wholeheartedly TOWARDS A SAFER CHURCH

Use of Social Media Policy 2023/24

This policy applies to any users (referred to in this policy as USERS) who use online and mobile platforms for sharing content and information, hosted by Morpeth Parish. "Social media" refers to social networking services, short-message services, (including e.g. texts, emails, Facebook) message boards, wikis, podcasts, image/video sharing sites and other methods for sharing real time information among users. Due to the ever-changing speed of social media, this policy applies to all new social media platforms, whether or not they are mentioned. All social media platforms are relevant and included.

THE PARISH SAFEGUARDING OFFICER (PSO) AND THE PCC HAVE OVERALL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE EFFECTIVE OPERATION OF THIS POLICY. All volunteers and employees are responsible for their own actions on social media and must follow the latest guidance on the diocesan website www.newcastle.anglican.org/safeguarding/ when representing the parish. Please also refer to the advice below. Any questions or concerns should be directed to the PSO and/or PCC.

Good Practice Guidelines

These good practice guidelines have been compiled to help USERS fulfil, with confidence, their role as online ambassadors for this parish, the wider Church and our Christian faith. Essentially, you should participate online in the same way as you would in any other public forum. Your actions should be consistent with your work and Christian values and you are responsible for the things you do, say or write.

It is therefore important that when this parish engages with our community and worshippers through these platforms, it must be done safely to avoid the risk of:

- Forming inappropriate relationships.
- Saying something you should not, such as offensive, sexual or suggestive comments.
- Crossing the boundaries between public work/ministry and your private life.
- Grooming and impersonation.
- Bullying and harassment.
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Social Media Tips

1. Be selective! There are a variety of digital platforms available. Use the right medium for the message. For example, don't use a Facebook post to communicate sensitive or private information.

2. Use grace! Always use Biblical wisdom when utilizing social media. For example, if someone has offended you, consider speaking with them privately on the matter. Do not post offensive responses publicly.

*3. Ask us! In areas where this policy does not provide a direct answer for how members of our community should answer social media questions, please check with the **LEAD ADMINISTRATORS OF THIS POLICY referred to as LAP** (see Appendix 1 at the end of this document) before speaking as a representative of the parish.*

Use of Social Media

- 1. All policies, including harassment, confidentiality, and software use, apply in the extensive use of social media.**
- 2. USERS should carefully consider giving any personal information via social media, e.g. address or telephone number, unless it is in a private message to someone you know and trust.**
- 3. USERS who misuse the Morpeth Parish's social media resources in ways that violate the law or other ministry policies are subject to having administrator rights removed.**
- 4. USERS who are interested in representing Morpeth Parish must read and agree to follow these guidelines and have permission of LAP (see Appendix 1 of this document.) They should also attend diocesan social media training whenever possible and advise LAP accordingly.**

Guidance for USERS

DO

- ✓ Be vigilant when using social media.
- ✓ Maintain the utmost integrity – honesty, transparency, consistency and accountability are key. Treat online communication with children, young people and adults as you would any communication that is face to face. Always maintain the same level of confidentiality.
- ✓ Report any safeguarding concerns that arise on social media to the Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO) and Responsible Caring Group (RCG) for their attention and joint consideration.
- ✓ Always assume that everything you write is permanent (even if you delete it later on, it may have been seen and re-published or referred to elsewhere) and may be viewed by anyone at any time. Assume that everything can be traced back to you personally as well as to your colleagues or the parish and that anything you post is permanent. Always think before you post.
- ✓ Draw clear boundaries around your social media usage associated with your private life and your use of social media for public ministry.
- ✓ USERS are solely responsible for the content they publish online, including content from their own social media pages. It must be absolutely clear that all views/posts are your personal views and not those of Morpeth Parish.
- ✓ Use Morpeth Parish groups (e.g. Parish Facebook, Boys Brigade text group, WhatsApp, etc.) to communicate on-line with children, young people and/or vulnerable adults. The LAP should be able to access this and review conversations, and the accounts should be visible to children/young people and their parents. Children/young people must be made aware that any communication could be viewed by LAP. Save any messages and threads through social networking sites, so that you can provide evidence to LAP of your exchange if required.
- ✓ When working with children/young people, always ask parents/carers for consent, preferably written using a Parish Consent Form to:
 - Take any form of electronic record – giving them the right to “opt out”.
 - Use and store photographs of those participating in activities or events in official parish publications and/or on the parish's social media, website and displays. *Be ready to remove an image as quickly as possible if requested.*
 - Use telephone, text message, email or other messaging services in order to communicate
 - Connect using Morpeth Parish social media pages.
- ✓ Avoid one-to-one communication with a child or young person.
- ✓ Use clear and unambiguous language in all communications and avoid abbreviations that could be misinterpreted.

- ✓ Always be aware of the privacy of participants in any groups communicating using social media, i.e. blind copy emails when necessary.
- ✓ Screenshot any inappropriate material received through social networking sites or other electronic means and show immediately to the Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO) and/or Responsible Caring Group (RCG) for their attention and joint consideration.
- ✓ Use passwords and log off promptly after use to ensure that nobody else can use social media pretending to be you.

DO NOT

- Use a personal Facebook or any other social media account in your work with children, young people or vulnerable adults. IF YOU DECIDE TO USE THIS MEDIUM, BE EXTREMELY VIGILANT AND CONTINUE TO CONFORM WITHIN THE PARISH GUIDELINES AND WITHIN THE LAW.
- Facebook stalk (i.e. search through people's Facebook pages to find out about them).
- Say anything on social media that you would not be happy saying in a public meeting, to someone's face, writing in a local newspaper or on headed notepaper.
- Make inappropriate comments on photos or posts, or share content.
- Use visual media (e.g. Skype, Facetime) for one to one conversation with young people, use only in group settings.

In particular, do not allow content to contain or share links to other sites that contain:

- Libellous, defamatory, bullying or harassing statements.
- Breaches of copyright and data protection.
- Material of an illegal nature.
- Offensive sexual or abusive references.
- Inappropriate language.
- Anything which may be harmful to a child, young person or vulnerable adult, or which may bring the church into disrepute or compromise its reputation.

Public Relations Guidelines

1. Parish communications may not be used for partisan political messages or paid advertising, with the exception of parish events and PCC approved charitable events.
2. Any external communication from the Morpeth Parish office regarding serious/unexpected incidents will not be posted without approval by LAP and must follow this policy's guidelines.
3. When using Morpeth Parish's official name and logo, these branding items must be approved prior to official use.

This policy is reviewed each year by the Parochial Church Council

Rector

Churchwardens
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Date