



## **St George's URC Hemel Hempstead**

### **Social Media & Communication Policy**

This policy is based on guidelines published by the United Reformed Church

#### **SOCIAL MEDIA**

An umbrella term used to describe websites and applications that allow users to share content with others or to participate in social networking. For example, but not exclusively, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, online forums, blogs, snapchat, flickr.

#### **BASIC PRINCIPLES**

When 'posting' on behalf of St George's URC remember that you are a representative of the URC and a responsible ambassador for Christ, the Church and your part in it.

Private forums/sites cannot be guaranteed to be private. When you post either in an official capacity or on a personal account it should be in a manner not detrimental to the image of St George's URC.

Internet content is subject to all laws in force. There is an internet code of conduct prohibiting content which includes, although not exclusively, defamatory comments, pornography and harassment.

Content posted on social media may attract wider interest so be prepared for additional publicity both positive and negative.

Social media should stay current and active, regularly monitored and up to date.

Privacy settings should be appropriately set and those in charge of social media platforms (account managers) should regularly check levels of security and privacy.

Be aware of the Data Protection Act 1998 on using photographs and film footage.

#### **DO's**

Appoint at least two people to monitor and manage the church's social media accounts. It is recommended that one person be part of the leadership team. (These account managers will be the public voice of the church).

A code of conduct should be used on social media sites – (See communications policy \*code of conduct issued by the URC at the end of this document).

Remove any hateful, aggressive or other offensive posts immediately after being notified.

Facebook – use an 'organisation' Facebook page, not a personal one and publish a code of conduct for users of the page.

Account managers should monitor youth chatrooms/groups to ensure the social media policy guidelines are adhered to.

Be respectful of theological viewpoints. Viewpoints that represent St George's ethics and beliefs should be promoted by the account managers.

Respond quickly to queries, be welcoming, credible, fair and honest.

Respect the privacy of the congregation, members and adherents. Discussion of pastoral care issues contravene data protection.

Share good news of the church life. Seek permission if it is not your story to tell, (i.e. marriages, anniversaries).

Account managers should continually monitor St George's social media sites and remove anything that could be construed as offensive, threatening or indicative of bullying and remaining within legal frameworks and safeguarding issues.

Ensure you have sufficient spyware protection on your hardware devices.

## **DON'TS**

Never make comments that could be considered racist, sexist, homophobic (or discriminatory in any other way), gossip or anything detrimental to St George's policies and beliefs.

Do not add private advertising to any St George's media sites unless permission has been sought from the leadership team or account managers.

Do not engage in conversation with individuals who are being deliberately hateful, or convey any verbal aggression. Remove posts or report it to the account manager for removal.

Images of children should not be published by account managers or church members and should be removed as soon as practicably possible (unless written permission from parent/guardian has been received). There is no regulation against parents posting pictures of their own children, but care should be taken to maintain anonymity.

It is recommended that links between young people and adults are only made on church or youth group organisation pages and not personal pages.

Be aware of the following risks of using personal Facebook and social media pages and private messaging:

- Lack of privacy – i.e. your friends and the comments they make on your page may not be suitable for youngsters
- Blurring of boundaries – the role of church worker/mentor/role model may give the impression of 'equal friend'.
- Social media restrictions (e.g. Facebook users must be at least 13 years old)
- If you are in any doubt over child protection issues, do not delete evidences, but report them immediately to a member of the leadership team or St George's child protection representatives who will advise you.

## **E-MAIL**

Prayer chain items should be sent to the prayer chain co-ordinator to publicise to the church.

Any group e-mails sent should be addressed to the sender (yourself) and all other individuals should be BCC'd (blind carbon copy) to ensure e-mail addresses are not circulated.

Any group e-mails should ideally be sent by St George's leadership team, administrator or appointed person.

Church member's lists and adherents lists should not be published on any social media.

## **COPYRIGHT**

Do not use any content subject to copyright without seeking written permission from the copyright holder.

## **URC COMMUNICATIONS POLICY - \*CODE OF CONDUCT**

The following is a list of guidelines for commenting on our posts –we're basically asking you to show respect for all users, stay positive and generate good conversations. So please:

Stay on topic,

No offensive language,

No personal attacks (hostile, derogatory or deliberately insulting comments toward a specific individual or group),

Don't say things to people in a way that you wouldn't want them said to you,

No bullying, intimidation or hate speech,

No flaming (*posting comments intended to induce an angry response*),

No spamming, (*sending the same message indiscriminately to a large numbers of Internet users*),

Never form private relationships with children you are not related to.

The communication team reserves the right to remove any comment or URL at any time for any reason.

Please note, if a portion of a comment is inappropriate, the entire comment will be deleted.

For further guidance please speak to St Georges Leadership team.

Information and guidance taken from St George's Leadership Team and:

<http://urc.org.uk/images/Communications/Guidelines-for-the-use-of-social-media-final-ratified-by-MC.pdf>

Signed on behalf of the Elders

Approved at the Elders meeting on