

Social Media Policy



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Presbytery of Aberdeen and Shetland

Guidelines for Presbyters

The Presbytery of Aberdeen and Shetland welcomes the use of social media as it provides easier ways for congregations to:

- communicate instantly with members, keeping them informed and updated
- signpost involvement with the local community
- forge relationships with individuals and the wider community that build trust and understanding

Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and any online communication have the ability to achieve these outcomes but it is necessary to outline a few issues Presbyters should bear in mind when communicating online.

Websites and Social media pages should be up to date and current.

The Church of Scotland has produced detailed guidelines for Social Media use focussing on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. This can be found by clicking this link:

<https://www.aberdeenshetlandpresbytery.org.uk/wpcontent/uploads/2020/12/Social-Media-Guidelines.pdf>

Choosing the right social media platform is important and involves consideration of who you are trying to reach and what you are trying to achieve.

Once you have chosen your platform you can start to create your congregational account.

Always ensure that there are two or more people who hold the login details and passwords for your social media accounts. If not, you will have to start from scratch when someone leaves.

Images

Ensure you use high quality, eye catching, non-watermarked images which fit the optimum size for each social media platform.

Facebook is the most popular social networking site worldwide. Facebook offers three options; a profile, a page, or a group.

A profile represents a single individual and is for non-commercial use.

A page is a timeline for organisations and businesses.

Groups are effective in connecting family, peers, colleagues or people with a shared interest.

A Facebook page is recommended. A page will enable people to find you and explore the life of your congregation. This page can be used to advertise events and to share prayers, images, videos, thoughts and quotes.

You must already have a personal Facebook account that you can use to create a page. You will then become the admin of the page. You should then assign other people as admins and editors. You can remove yourself as an admin for the page later if you no longer wish your Profile to be attached to the church page.

Twitter is often the first place news stories appear online. People also use Twitter to hold global conversations, make friends and build support for campaigns. Yet Twitter is one of the most difficult social platforms for congregations to maintain. Tweets fly so fast and furiously, that on average they have a lifespan of around 10 minutes. So how do congregations use Twitter effectively? If you want to keep up a Twitter profile, you will need to sustain a steady flow of tweets. This may seem overwhelming, but your congregation is potentially already producing enough content to be used.

When choosing your twitter username (also known as your handle), you are limited to 15 characters. It should be something relevant, unique and easy to remember. Usernames are preceded by the @ symbol (@ChurchScotland). If you are planning on setting up an Instagram account as well, you will want to check that the username is available on both platforms. Your display name (note: different from username) can be up to 50 characters and therefore you should be able to include your congregation's full name.

Instagram, users can connect with a global community which shares millions of photos and videos every day. This social platform works best on your mobile phone, and it is a wonderful place to explore the world and find like-minded individuals. Instagram has become an indispensable social media outlet, particularly for engaging with young people.

Safeguarding

Adults should think twice and consider speaking to a parent before adding/following children under 16 on social media. Always obtain consent from parents before using images of children on social media. Congregations address this in different ways. Some have a blanket consent form which parents sign before their children take part in activities. Other congregations choose not to include photographs of children on their social media accounts at all. Consult the Church of Scotland safeguarding resources for further guidance.

<https://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/about-us/safeguarding-service>

Personal View Sharing to the local news and on Social Media Platforms

Church of Scotland personnel are to be mindful of their status as a Minister, Deacon, Parish Worker or Elder of the Church of Scotland and for such reasons should consider carefully before engaging with local news agencies and on social media platforms ensuring that they consider that what they are sharing is appropriate.

Confidentiality

Be sensitive about confidentiality and the risk of intrusion. Social media does not change our fundamental understanding about confidentiality across the whole life of the Church. When telling a story about a situation which involves someone else, always ask yourself: is this my story to tell? Would it cause distress, inconvenience, upset or embarrassment to others if they found out you had shared in this way? If in any doubt, do not share it online.

Privacy and Security

Be mindful of your own security. Be careful about the personal details you share online. Assume anything you share about yourself is in the public domain. Do not assume anything electronic is secure. You might be able to delete or recall an email but there's no guarantee the recipient will. Equally, your privacy settings on your social media tools might mean only your accepted "friends" or "followers" can see the things you say, but there is no guarantee that they will not pass them on outside your trusted circles.