

BETHANY CHURCH

Social Media Policy

Church details

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This policy should be reviewed every 2 years. The next review is due on: March 2027

Introduction

This policy is to help BETHANY CHURCH utilise the benefits of social media, whilst sensibly managing the risks. It covers the use of all forms of social media, including Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, X and all other social networking sites, internet postings and blogs. It applies to use of social media for work purposes as well as personal use where that may affect what the church does or its reputation.

“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. Social media is used regularly to communicate about BETHANY CHURCH’s work, but staff and volunteers may also use social media for personal purposes. The separation between personal and professional use and views can be blurred on social media, and so while we recognise the value of the use of social media, we have certain standards, outlined in this policy, which we require everyone to observe.

Our overriding biblical principle in all our communications, including via social media, is to seek to speak the truth in love.

Aims of the policy

The aims of the policy are to:

- provide staff and trustees with the overarching principles that guide the use of social media;
- to protect those who interact with the Church’s activities and who make use of social media; and information technology as part of their involvement with us;
- ensure Church information remains secure and is not compromised; and
- ensure the Church’s reputation is not damaged or adversely affected.

Who does this policy apply to?

This policy applies to staff, trustees and anyone working on behalf of the church.

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 or personal equipment.

General principles

The following general principles apply:

- Personal email addresses (not church email accounts) should be used for personal social media accounts.
- Information shared on social media should be considered to be in the public domain, regardless of the privacy settings applied. Posts should be considered indelible – they will always exist somewhere once made.
- Respect and kindness should always be shown to others. Social media or other forms of communication should never be used to attack or abuse others; anything which could be considered discriminatory, defamatory, bullying or harassment should be avoided.
- The privacy of others should be respected.
- Information which could, directly or indirectly, damage the Church's interests or compromise its reputation should not be shared.
- Confidential information about the church, its staff, members or attenders should not be revealed.

Breach of the policy

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.

Individuals may 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.

Specific guidance for staff

- Occasional personal use of social media during working hours is permitted so long as it does not involve unprofessional or inappropriate content, does not interfere with your employment responsibilities or productivity and complies with this policy.
- Social media should not be used in a way that breaches any of our other policies. If a communication would not be appropriate outside social media, using social media does not make it appropriate.

- In the course of your duties, social media must not be used to debate, challenge, promote or support any political/social/cultural ideology, movement, message or campaign other than matters that are consistent with and advance the church's Christian ethos or mission.
- Whether at work or otherwise, you should ensure that your profile and any content you post are consistent with our professional standards and do not harm your ability to act as an ambassador for us and for Jesus Christ.
- Unless it forms part of your duties or is consistent with and advances our Christian ethos and mission, you should not use social media (whether at work or otherwise) in a way that you could be perceived as speaking or acting on our behalf.
- If you are uncertain or concerned about the appropriateness of any statement or posting, refrain from posting it until you have discussed it with one of the Trustees or a Line Manager.
- If you see social media content that disparages or reflects poorly on us, you should inform the church trustees.

Using social media on behalf of the church

Social media is used by BETHANY CHURCH to promote and share information about our activities and work.

Matt Rich is responsible for setting up and managing BETHANY CHURCH's social media channels. Only those authorised to do so by Matt Rich will have access to these accounts.

All social media content should have a clear purpose and bring value to our audience.

Where individuals seek to challenge, question or debate content posted or the activities beliefs of the church - staff or those working on behalf of the church should not seek to respond publicly on social media platforms but, where a question appears to be genuine, should where possible respond privately via email, phone or face-to-face.

Care should be taken with the presentation of content: making sure that there are no typos, misspellings or grammatical errors, that the information shared is accurate, the images are clear and licensed for use and graphics follow any branding guidance.

Content about individuals, including images of individuals must not be shared without their permission. If using interviews, videos or photos that clearly identify a child or young person, staff must ensure they have the explicit consent of a parent or guardian before using them on social media.

Staff and volunteers should refrain from offering personal opinions via the church's social media accounts, either directly by commenting or indirectly by 'liking', 'sharing' or 'reposting'.

Individuals should not set up other social media channels on behalf of BETHANY CHURCH or that purport to be on behalf of the charity.

If a complaint is made on BETHANY CHURCH's social media channels, advice should be sought from one of the Trustees before responding. If not available, then they should speak to other leaders in the church.

Social media for BETHANY CHURCH groups and ministries

Groups or ministries operating as part of BETHANY CHURCH may have their own social media accounts to communicate with participants and share information about their events.

These accounts should make clear their association with BETHANY CHURCH and follow the guidance in this policy, particularly that related to using social media on behalf of the church.

BETHANY CHURCH WhatsApp groups

BETHANY CHURCH operates one official church WhatsApp group – this is the only WhatsApp group that every member of the church is strongly encouraged to belong to. This group is a Broadcast Only group which means that only the church leaders can send messages. The group will be used for sharing prayer requests and from time to time other important or helpful information. Our normal practice is to only send messages between 8am and 9pm. For the sake of clarity please don't give any other WhatsApp groups the title "Bethany Church" or use the Bethany 'B' logo image. All information received on this WhatsApp group should be treated as confidential to the Bethany Church members and only shared with others after receiving specific permission from the person who requested prayer or from the church leaders.

Extra WhatsApp Groups

– all other WhatsApp groups are informal and not official church groups. These WhatsApp groups may be helpful but are also optional, and if you create one please be gracious and understanding if people decide to opt out. Although these extra groups are not official church groups please treat them with care and consideration as you would any other part of church community life together.