**Safeguarding and Social Media**

**Social Media**

The Methodist Church recognises that the Internet is an integral part of children’s and young people’s lives.  The use of the Internet opens up fantastic educational and social opportunities and experiences.  There are numerous ways in which children and young people can access the Internet, through the use of school and home computers, games consoles and mobile phones.  As the Internet and other forms of social media open up a whole new world of learning, opportunity and experiences, its use also opens up some risks.

In accordance with the Methodist Church Safeguarding policy, we are committed to protecting children and young people from harm.

**Guidelines**

The Methodist Church Social Media Policy may be found here:

https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/digital-church/social-media-guidelines/

**Why use social media?**

The Methodist Church encourages the use of social media tools as a means of extending our engagement with people inside and outside the church. This includes:

* Sharing our stories
* Engaging in conversations ‘where people are’
* Sharing, learning and encouraging
* Reaching those who cannot physically attend church
* Forming and deepening relationships locally and globally

**Consider the safety of yourself and others**

It is important that the safety of children, young people and vulnerable adults especially, must be maintained. Please read

https ://media.methodist.org.uk/media/documents/children-and-youth-social-media-guidance-060520\_eV4RGRd.pdf

If you have a safeguarding concern, please inform the [**district safeguarding officer**](https://www.methodist.org.uk/safeguarding/safeguarding-contacts/).

Conversation on social media can sometimes develop into heated and pointless argument. Be aware of the effect on yourself, and don’t feel you always need to engage. You can always ‘sign off’ from a heated conversation calmly, with something like ‘I think we’ll have to agree to disagree. Peace.’

**Respect**

Do not post or share content that is sexually explicit, inflammatory, hateful, abusive, threatening or otherwise disrespectful. Try to think of the effect on others who may see what you post.

**Be transparent**

Don’t mislead people about who you are, or use pseudonyms.

**Be relevant**

Don't add comments to a social media post that are irrelevant to the topic. Engage in the conversation rather than broadcasting opinions.

**Disagree, in love**

If you have a criticism you need to make, consider carefully the tone of what you write. If you are personally attacked, do not respond in kind. Being a Christian means that sometimes we must speak out and challenge injustice. But remember when you need to point out something you think is wrong, that there is a real, and possibly vulnerable, person at the receiving end of what you say.

**Be careful when sharing content**

Don’t share in haste. Read linked content thoroughly, or watch a video to the end so you know exactly what you are sharing, before you judge whether it is suitable to share.

It's also important to not share material that belongs to someone else and isn't available for you to use due to copyright. Make sure you always seek the copyright holder's permission before sharing or using content, if it hasn't already been given.

**Maintain confidentiality**

If telling a story about someone else, ask yourself first ‘**Is this my story to tell**?**’** Don’t reveal personal details about others without their explicit permission.

**Our responsibilities**

You may wish to develop some basic rules:

* All users must comply with the relevant social media platform's terms of use as well as our own terms of use
* We will remove, in whole or in part, posts that we feel are inappropriate, or discriminatory against any individual or group
* You are wholly responsible for any content you post including content that you choose to share
* We will remove messages and/or disable comments (where function allows) including reporting and/or blocking users on our social media channels who post messages or leave comments which we believe are:
  + Abusive or obscene
  + Deceptive or misleading
  + In violation of any intellectual property rights, including copyright
  + In violation of any law or regulation
  + Spam and off-topic content, including persistent negative and/or abusive posts in which the aim is to provoke a response
  + Promotional material, including links to external websites and promotions that are not relevant to the original post

Anyone repeatedly engaging with us using content or language which falls into the above categories will be blocked and/or reported to the associated social media platform. We will not tolerate or respond to abusive messages.