



## **Social Media Policy**

Leeds South and West Methodist Circuit endorses the Connexional guidance on Social media available on the Central Methodist Website

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/guidance-for-churches/digital-communication-guidance-for-churches/social-media/social-media-guidelines/>

### **Local Policy**

These principles cover all types of social media including websites, blogs, social networking sites, message boards and twitter. (This list is not exhaustive).

#### **1. Take responsibility for what you do**

You should participate online in the same way as you would with other public forums. You take responsibility for the things you do, say or write.

#### **2. Don't share personal information**

Never share personal details like home address and phone numbers except with someone you know and trust, and if you decide to do so then use a private message. Be aware an address can be disclosed in many ways for example via photos or a GPS position as well as in written form.

#### **3. Remember once published, its permanent**

Always remember that participating online results in your comments being permanently available and open to being republished in other media. Once something is posted to a blog or other internet site, it should be assumed to be still available even if it is later deleted from the original site.

#### **4. Keep within the law**

Stay within the legal framework and be aware that safeguarding, libel, slander, copyright and data protection laws apply, as well as the [Constitutional Practice and Discipline \(CPD\)](#) of the Methodist Church.

#### **5. Stay in the public domain when talking to under 18s**

When contacting young people using these sites always do this in a public way. Any communication on behalf of the Circuit should be kept public (or within protected groups) or logged. Messages should be saved and kept (both incoming and outgoing) and instant chat must never be used communicate with young people.

## 6. Seek Permission

Do not publish information or pictures where people can be identified without their permission. Written permission should be obtained from the parent or guardian of anyone under 18.

For general methodist guidelines on confidentiality, refer to **With Integrity and Skill** <http://www.methodist.org.uk/ministers-and-office-holders/pastoral-care/confidentiality-guidelines>

- if telling a story about anyone, ask yourself **Is this my story to tell?**

## 7. Make it clear – is it your own opinion or church policy?

Be aware that this may attract media interest in you as an individual, so proceed with care whether you are participating in an official or a personal capacity. If you have any doubts, take advice, but remember that you are responsible for your online activities.

It is recommended, where doubt may occur, that a disclaimer may be employed to ensure people know when you are expressing a personal view. E.g “the views expressed are my own and may not reflect the views of the Methodist Church”

**If you’re planning to set up a site, group, page, message board etc** – for example a Facebook page using the Circuit’s name, this must be agreed by the Superintendent. Do not use the Circuit’s name without agreement

## 8. Be true to our values as a member of the church

All those who hold office and/or membership within the church whether employed or volunteer should uphold personal standards of integrity online which are consistent with the teaching of the Methodist Church. E.g. support for a racist website would be inconsistent with the teaching of the Methodist Church

For Ministers and lay employees.

In particular uploading, posting, forwarding or posting a link to any of the following types of material on a social media website, whether in a professional or personal capacity, could amount to gross misconduct (this list is not exhaustive):

- (a) pornographic material (that is, writing, pictures, films and video clips of a sexually explicit or arousing nature);
- (b) a false and defamatory statement about any person or organisation;
- (c) material which is offensive, obscene, criminal discriminatory, derogatory or may cause embarrassment or distress for the organization.
- (d) confidential information (which you do not have express authority to disseminate)