Social Media Policy

(e-Safety Guidance is contained)

This policy applies to all staff, including clergy, Joint Council members, paid staff, volunteers (including children's and youth workers), those involving in leading or coordinating music and worship, and anyone else involved in working or volunteering on behalf of St Peter's.

Purpose of Policy

To protect children, young people and vulnerable adults who are ministered to by St Peter's and who make use of information technology (such as mobile phones/devices, games consoles and the Internet) as part of their involvement with the parishes.

To provide our staff. volunteers, and parents with the overarching principles that guide our approach to e-safety.

To ensure that, as a Christian community, we minister in line with our values, and within the law, in terms of how we use information technology and behave online.

To guide us as we seek to equip the children and young people with whom we minister to be safe, discerning, and wise users of information and communication technology.

We recognise that:

The welfare of the children, young people, and vulnerable adults to whom we minister and with whom we come into contact is paramount and should govern our approach to the use and management of electronic communications technologies and online behaviour.

All people, regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation, or identity, have the right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse.

Working in partnership with children, young people, their parents, carers, and other agencies is essential in promoting young people's welfare, and in helping young people to be responsible in their approach to e-safety; this equally applies to vulnerable adults and their carers.

The use of information technology is an essential part of all our lives; it is involved in how we as a church gather and store information, as well as how we communicate with each other. It is an intrinsic part of the experience of children and young people and is greatly beneficial to all. However, it can present challenges in terms of how we use it responsibly, and, if misused either by an adult or a young person, can be actually or potentially harmful.

We will seek to keep children, young people, and vulnerable adults safe by:

Treating any child protection concern arising from the online world in the same way, taking it just as seriously, as concerns arising from the offline world.

Ensuring that our parish safeguarding officer has access to up-to-date information and training regarding online safety, assisting them as appropriate to access this training.

Ensuring that all staff and volunteers at St Peter's' avoid using private forms of electronic communication (text message, email, direct messaging including on social media) to communicate with the children, young people and vulnerable adults they are responsible for.

Taking the use of such private communication between staff or volunteers and young people as seriously as one-on-one contact between adults and children without another responsible adult present. It is always the responsibility of the adult staff member or volunteer to put appropriate boundaries in place in their relationships with those to whom they minister, in both the offline and online worlds.

Using open online forums to communicate with children, such as Facebook youth group pages to notify young people of events etc.

Avoiding any form of inappropriate content in what we, our staff and our volunteers post online, including (but not limited to) sexual content, racist, sexist or otherwise bigoted content, or content promoting illegal activity.

Named Person/Social Media Administrator

- Create accounts and identifies those who will administer the accounts following Joint Council approval.

- Ensure the account is linked to an official church email account.

- Store account details with the names of those authorised to administer the accounts.

- Monitor the accounts.

- Keep written records of the consent for, and of which children and young people may or maynot appear on or communicate on church social media accounts.

- Manage the accounts and feedback to the Joint Council at each of their meetings with regards to any comments or questions

Approved Account Administrators must:

Have regard to the Church of England guidelines on social media and use the account only for the following purposes:

- To raise awareness of the church and to promote activities and events.

- To keep the congregations regularly updated on things happening within the church.

- To provide a 'window' into life at St Peter's and not to promote personal or outside events.

- Ensure that the content of any church sanctioned social media site should reflect well on the church.

- Monitor the account(s) for which they are responsible at least weekly.

- Ensure they are familiar with the church's social media policy and sign the office copy.

- Take responsibility for knowing which children and young people may or may not appear on or use social media sites.

- Immediately upon discovery, remove any inappropriate comments on or abuse of church sanctioned social media and inform the Named Person.

- Take care that any links to external sites from the account are appropriate and safe.

Congregation

- In the event of any offensive or inappropriate comments being made by a member of the congregation on any St Peter's social media site, they will be invited to remove the post and, if appropriate, to discuss with a member of the clergy.

Use of images in social media

The following guidelines must be strictly adhered to:

- Permission to use photos or video recordings should be sought in advance and consent forms should be signed by parents for use of any images in social media.

- All account administrators should be aware of children and young people who do not have parental permission to appear on social media sites and whose pictures should not be published.

- No published photographs of children or young people may identify any child by name or any other personally identifying information.

- All account administrators should exercise their professional judgement about whether an image is appropriate to share on social media. Children and young people especially should be appropriately dressed and not subject to ridicule.

Use of Social Media in Youth Ministry

Young people communicate through social media, and it is essential for our ministry that we engage with them effectively and safely. Social media is continually changing, and this policy will be reviewed and updated annually, but the principles embodied in this document will continue to be applied. This policy is designed to provide a framework to protect children, young people, staff, and volunteers.

General principles

We will maintain electronic versions of sensitive personal data securely, according to the principles of the General Data Protection Regulation as per our Data Protection Policy, which can be found at:
https://stpeterineastgate.org.uk/admin/policies/

We will follow the latest guidelines and advice of the Church of England as found at:
https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/digital-labs/blogs/guide-getting-started-social-media

We will make use of advice and training opportunities from websites such as the Government's Thinkuknow website: http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk and Childline: https://www.childline.org.uk

We will point parents to online safety awareness material such as:
Thinkuknow   http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk
Parents Protect   https://www.parentsprotect.co.uk/
UK Safer Internet Centre   https://www.saferinternet.org.uk/

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