



North Bedfordshire Methodist Circuit Social Media Policy

How a charity uses social media is the responsibility of all its Trustees, not just those who are responsible for the day to day posting.

This policy should be read alongside the draft guidance from the Charity Commission

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/draft-guidance-charities-use-of-social-media>

and the Methodist Church's social media guidance

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

1. How we will use social media

1.1 Overview

Objectives

- To reflect the calling of the Methodist Church to respond to the gospel of God's love in Christ and to live out its discipleship in worship and mission.
- To share all aspects of our church life and mission with our community and beyond.

Platforms and audiences

- Facebook @northbedfordshiremethodistcircuit
Facebook is where we share posts that reflect all aspects of our Circuit life and mission. It is for Circuit members, the local community, and anyone interested in finding out more about our Circuit or the Christian faith.

Moderating third party content

- Healthy debate is encouraged but comments of an offensive nature (e.g. racism, homophobia, sexism) will be removed or hidden as appropriate to the relevant platform.
- If necessary a second opinion will be sought from the Superintendent Minister, in the case of serious concerns the issue will be escalated to the Methodist Church Press Office.
- Content can be shared if it is in line with Methodist Church doctrine and practice. Typical third parties from whom content can be shared might include, Eco Church and Connexional accounts etc.

1.2 Oversight and controls

- At least two people should have access to all social media accounts. These should be Trustees or church members with appropriate skills approved by the Trustees. *(NB: at present we have only one admin – this is not good practice)*
- Routine posting is the responsibility of a Trustee. Monitoring and review are the responsibility of... *(NB: At present there is no additional review – this is not good practice)*
- The wording of any posts dealing with high profile or contentious issues should be agreed with the Superintendent Minister.

1.3 Required conduct for those managing the accounts

- Model Christian values.
- Posts should be in line with Methodist Church doctrine.
- Additional training can be undertaken where a need is identified (e.g. developing knowledge of new platforms or in specific areas such as fundraising)

1.4 Relationship to other policies

This policy should be read alongside relevant Circuit and Connexional policies, particularly those relating to safeguarding and social media.

1.5 Responding to incidents

- Content can be amended or deleted by account admins.
- Guidance on when there is a need to report a serious incident to the Charity Commission can be read here <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/how-to-report-a-serious-incident-in-your-charity>
- Serious issues that should be reported to full Trustee board are those which jeopardise the reputation of North Bedfordshire Methodist Circuit.

2 Managing risk

2.1 Compliance

Content should be consistent with the Charitable Objects:

THE PURPOSES OF THE METHODIST CHURCH ARE AND SHALL BE DEEMED TO HAVE BEEN SINCE THE DATE OF UNION THE ADVANCEMENT OF - (A) THE CHRISTIAN FAITH IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE DOCTRINAL STANDARDS AND THE DISCIPLINE OF THE METHODIST CHURCH; (B) ANY CHARITABLE PURPOSE FOR THE TIME BEING OF ANY CONNEXIONAL, DISTRICT, CIRCUIT, LOCAL OR OTHER ORGANISATION OF THE METHODIST CHURCH; (C) ANY CHARITABLE PURPOSE FOR THE TIME BEING OF ANY SOCIETY OR INSTITUTION SUBSIDIARY OR ANCILLARY TO THE METHODIST CHURCH; (D) ANY PURPOSE FOR THE TIME BEING OF ANY CHARITY BEING A CHARITY SUBSIDIARY OR ANCILLARY TO THE METHODIST CHURCH.

Social media use should be compliant with relevant laws, including:

- UK GDPR rules on publishing personal information or data
- privacy (misusing private information or intruding on a person's right to privacy)
- copyright law
- defamation law
- whistleblower protection
- equality and human rights including discrimination, victimisation, harassment, and freedom of expression

Social media use should also be compliant with the terms of the relevant platforms.

2.2 Problematic content posted or shared by anyone connected to North Bedfordshire Methodist Circuit.

Trustees, employees or volunteers are free to post or share personal content and viewpoints on their own social media accounts.

Sometimes there are risks that an individual's posts are interpreted as reflecting those of a charity. For example a trustee, employee or volunteer could post inappropriate content:

- using a personal account where they can be associated with the charity, either through mixing both personal and professional content or because they list their workplace or role
- using an entirely personal account that could reasonably be linked to the person's role at the charity.

If personal content has brought negative attention to the charity, then the first step will be a conversation to try and resolve the situation swiftly, with escalation as appropriate, firstly to the Superintendent Minister and then to the Methodist Church Press Office.

2.3 Third party content

If third parties mention North Bedfordshire methodist Circuit or share content in any way that is a cause for concern, this should be raised with the account holders if appropriate or escalated to the Methodist Church Press Office.

3 Engaging on controversial topics

A charity can engage on emotive or controversial topics if this is a way of achieving its charitable purpose and is in the charity's best interests.

Consideration should be given to:

- the risks to the charity, including its reputation, and actions you can take to mitigate these. These include informing key stakeholders of your plans and thinking about how the charity's conduct on social media may help manage potential criticism (for example by acting with tolerance and respect)
- the impact on your resources and staff, for example of receiving significant number of complaints or negative attention

4 Campaigning or political activity

Charities may use social media to engage in campaigning and political activity. However, campaigning and political activity by charities are subject to additional rules, set out here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/speaking-out-guidance-on-campaigning-and-political->

Campaigning: Refers to awareness raising and efforts to educate or involve the public by mobilising their support or to affect public attitudes. Often this involves activities to ensure existing laws are upheld.

Political Activity: Refers to activities which aim to gain support for, or to oppose a change, in law or government policy.

5 Fundraising

The Code of Fundraising Practice applies to fundraising on social media platforms. The Code outlines both the legal rules that apply to fundraising and the standards designed to ensure that fundraising is open, honest and respectful. The Commission expects all charities that fundraise to fully comply with the Code. <https://www.fundraisingregulator.org.uk/code>

6 Staying safe online

Account admins should be aware of the processes for reporting fake accounts and for recovering hacked accounts on the relevant platforms.

September 2024

Review date September 2026

Signed

Dated

9/9/24

Agreed as above review in 2 years unless updates needed

North Bedfordshire Circuit Meeting September 2024
Issues requiring circuit action

1. Adoption of the North Bedfordshire Methodist policies as listed below for 2 years unless they need updating before.

Issue

To approve the Circuit policies as follows:

- Circuit Safeguarding Policy
- Circuit Social Media Policy
- Circuit Electronic Communication Policy
- Circuit Domestic Abuse Policy
- Circuit Callers to Manses Policy

Timing

Immediate

Recommendation

All of the above policies are approved for 2 years, unless revision is needed before.

Background and argument

All policies to be agreed where no changes are needed at the September North Bedfordshire Methodist Circuit Meeting every two years.

Next Steps

Proposed by *Stephen Paul*

Seconded by *Phil Dams*

Abstained.....

Agreed by the Meeting

Signed Rev Michael Giles *[Signature]*
Superintendent Minister
9th September 2024