

WRITTEN AND SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

This policy, as approved and adopted by the Circuit Meeting held on 13 January 2021, applies to Ministers, lay employees, office holders and volunteers with a representative role within the Ripon and Lower Dales Methodist Circuit and its churches therein.

All forms of communication provide opportunities to share the Good News of Jesus Christ in the world. However, they come with responsibility and values. Whereas the printed word has a certain finality of declaration about it, social media particularly, is interactive, conversational and open-ended. Moreover, it happens in a public, not private, space. The Methodist Church and this Circuit, therefore, ask all users to use social media tools and written documents, responsibly as a means of engaging in an interactive conversation with people of all faiths and none. As Gospel people, our conversation should be 'seasoned with salt' (Colossians 4:6), and this policy aim to help us to do so.

The principles applied to this are:

- Be credible. Be accurate, fair, thorough and transparent.
- Be consistent. Encourage constructive criticism and deliberation.
- Be cordial, honest and professional **at all times**.
- Be responsive. When you gain insight, share it **where appropriate**.
- Be integrated. Wherever possible, align online participation with other communications.
- **Be a good representative of the Methodist Church**. Remember that you are an ambassador for Christ, the Church and your part of it.
- Disclose your position as a member or officer of the Church, making it clear when speaking personally. Let Galatians 5:22-26 guide your behaviour.
- Be respectful: respect confidentiality. Respect the views of others even where you disagree.

Policy

1. You should participate, in writing or online, including email communications, in the same way as you would with other public forums. You take responsibility for the things you do, say or write.
2. 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. 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. 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. For general guidelines on confidentiality, refer to With Integrity and Skill - if telling a story about anyone, ask yourself "Is this my story to tell?"
6. 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 written and online activities**.
7. Staff should be aware of, and act, in line with Speaking for the Methodist Church, the Team email policy and the Team policy on the use of IT equipment, as well as With Integrity and Skill and the whistle blowing policy where necessary.
8. Remember that you are a disciple of Christ, his earthly representative and act with respect, love and kindness at all times.

Review Date September 2021