

Christ Church Willaston Communication Policy

Ephesians 4:29²⁹ *Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up,^[b] as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear.*

What are the aims of our communication policy?

To spread the Gospel effectively and to advertise our services and activities, we need to welcome the use of a range of media.

What forms of communication are available to Christ Church Willaston?

Online communication forms are, but not limited to:

- the church website, Facebook, X (Twitter), Instagram, email, Messenger, Whats App or similar messaging services

*NB: Software applications such as Snapchat that routinely delete information and files/attachments shared after they are seen **are not** permitted for use in church activities*

Christ Church Willaston will use the following forms of online communication - the church website, Facebook and email only.

Hard copy (printed) communication forms are, but not limited to, a parish magazine, newsletters, posters, event flyers, letters, reports. Information sheets and letters.

Christ Church Willaston will use the following forms of hard copy (printed) communication- the parish magazine, Sunday News, posters, newsletters, flyers, reports, information sheets and letters.

Who is covered by this policy?

The communication policy is designed to ensure that Christ Church Willaston communicates within the law and in a way consistent with our Christian faith. Safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults is of the utmost importance at all times.

Does the Church of England offer any guidelines on communication with the wider world?

Yes, it does. The points below are taken from the Church of England and Archbishops **social media guidelines** but can be applied across all forms of communication including hard copies and online:

- **Be safe.** The safety of children, young people and vulnerable adults must be maintained. If you have any concerns, ask the diocesan safeguarding team.
- **Be respectful.** Do not post or share content that is sexually explicit, inflammatory, hateful, abusive, threatening or otherwise disrespectful. This includes images.
- **Be kind.** Treat others how you would wish to be treated and assume the best in people. If you have a criticism or critique to make, consider not just *whether* you would say it in person, but the tone you would use.
- **Be honest.** Don't mislead people about who you are.
- **Take responsibility.** You are accountable for the things you do, say and write. Text and images shared can be public and permanent, even with privacy settings in place. If you're not sure, don't post it.
- **Be a good ambassador.** Personal and professional life can easily become blurred online so think before you post.
- **Disagree well.** Some conversations can be places of robust disagreement and it's important we apply our values in the way we express them.
- **Credit others.** Acknowledge the work of others. Respect copyright and always credit where it is due. Be careful not to release sensitive or confidential information and always question the source of any content you are considering amplifying.
- **Follow the rules.** Abide by the terms and conditions of the various social media platforms themselves. If you see a comment that you believe breaks their policies, then please report it to a member of Christ church's clergy or safeguarding officer.

What is Christ Church Willaston's Communication Policy?

In accordance with the Church of England and Archbishops social media guidelines and consultation with the Diocese safeguarding team, all Christ Church Willaston communication will:

- endeavour to be witnesses of our faith and ensure that everything we post will be factually and biblically sound and be in language those outside the church can relate to.
- ensure that safeguarding and compliance with GDPR and data protection are paramount. The Data Protection Act 2018 is the UK's implementation of the General Data Protection (GDPR)
- ensure that any adults and children over the age of 16 must give written consent for a photograph or video of themselves being used because attendance at a church service reveals religious belief, which is a special category under GDPR. **A photo release form should be signed** and it must include all the places that the photo or video may be used by church. Regular attendees need only sign this once but it should be refreshed every three years. However, new visitors must be asked before the service or the event.
- ensure that identifiable individuals are happy with any particular photograph or video before being published.
- ensure that photographs or videos containing children (16 years and under) are only to be used by church if consent has been given by their parent or guardian, following the same guidelines as for adults. Vulnerable adults may only be filmed or photographed if they are able to give written consent and understand what is being asked of them.
- endeavour to be constructive in the ways that we engage with people, whether they support our view or speak against them. All communication should always show kindness and reflect our Christian values. We should not say anything on any platform that we would not be happy saying in a public meeting, to someone's face, writing in a newspaper or on headed notepaper.
- ensure that what we write will never be sexually explicit, inflammatory, hateful, abusive, threatening or otherwise disrespectful. This includes, but is not limited to, images, videos, GIFs etc.
- be safe, public and open in all communications.
- **never** send direct messages to children, young people or vulnerable adults or add them to our personal accounts or addresses.
- ensure that what we write will not reflect our own personal life or interests. Personal and church life can easily become blurred.

- be careful not to release sensitive or confidential information and always question the source of any content we are considering amplifying. We should always ask is it our story to tell so that it doesn't cause distress, inconvenience, upset or embarrassment to others.
- ensure that all communication online and hard copy be approved by designated members of Willaston Christ church. (See Appendix C for an example of good practice) *This does not apply to emails sent between members of Christ Church regarding church matters but all emails should be consistent with our Christian character. (see emails in Appendix A)*
- have **TWO** administrators for ALL **ONLINE** platforms. This is to protect all users and allow for continuity of service e.g. in times of illness, holidays etc
- ensure that we acknowledge the work of others and respect copyright when it is due. This includes checking the source is legitimate and is not linked with anything that could bring the church into disrepute. If in doubt don't post or write it.
- not advertise any organisation or charity unless approved by the PCC. Please refer to Appendix B: the roles and responsibilities of Parish News Editor, Distributor and Financial Secretary for further details.
- guard against any kind of bullying, harassment, grooming, impersonation and forming inappropriate relationships.
- report any safeguarding issues to the Parish Safeguarding Officer immediately. If they are not available it will be reported directly to the Diocesan safeguarding team.

Standards and responsibilities:

Christ Church Willaston expect the use of all online communication to maintain the high standards set in Appendix A.

Christ Church Willaston expect the use of all hard copy (printed) communication to also follow, where applicable, the high standards set in Appendix A and B.

Any breach of these standards will be considered as a breach of this policy and steps will be taken to address that behaviour as appropriate. These steps may involve asking a person to withdraw a post.

Approved by Christ Church Willaston PCC

Date: 24/2/25

Date for review: 24/2/26

Appendix A

Guidance and responsibilities for online communication (as produced by the Diocese of Exeter but is equally applicable to Christ Church Willaston and can also be applied to hard copy forms of communication where applicable)

1. Public Domain

The law views anything shared online as being in the public domain. Sharing thoughts and reflections with friends using social media or email might feel personal and private; but if more than one person can access what we have written, it is highly likely that the law would class it as "published". It is subject to the law touching libel, copyright, freedom of information and data protection.

If we wouldn't say something in the local newspapers, we shouldn't say it online.

There must be no swearing or offensive language.

2. Permanence

Anything said on the Web can be assumed to be permanent. Even if we delete a comment made on a website, it could still have already been seen by other people, re-published, or had a screenshot picture taken. It is easy to say something in the heat of the moment that we regret later, but it could remain permanently online for all to see.

3. Security

It is absolutely not safe to assume anything electronic is secure. Privacy settings on social media tools might mean comments going only to accepted "friends" or "followers" but there is no guarantee that they will not pass (repost) them outside trusted circles.

4. Gossip

Social media can pose a risk to confidentiality and be intrusive. Social media does not change our fundamental understanding about confidentiality in the life of the Church. When telling a story about a situation which involves someone else, it is always useful to pose the question "Is this my story to tell?"

Furthermore, we should ask if the story is likely to cause distress, inconvenience, upset or embarrassment to others if they discovered it had been shared in this way. If in any doubt at all, it should not be shared online.

5. Representatives

If we are church members, youth leaders or church employees, anything we do or say in the public domain will be interpreted by the public as representative of attitudes and behaviour in the Church. Controversial, hasty or insensitive comments can quickly attract the attention of the media. In the web environment, the person pressing the keys is ultimately responsible for their own online activities, but they can tar a lot of others with their own brush in the eyes of the media.

6. Separation

Keep a clear separation between personal and corporate accounts. If you tweet/message as yourself, mark the account clearly as “my own views” so there is no suggestion your opinions represent a wider church or organisation. If you tweet/message from an account representing the church, then make sure you avoid expressing personal opinions. Any account which carries the logo, address or website of the church should be seen as a corporate account and only speak for the church.

7. Recommendations

Take care with external links. When you link to material, check out the website you are linking to – is its overall focus one you are happy to publicise and promote?

8. Real-time Relationships

Interactions in the virtual world need to be transparent. Healthy boundaries and practices must be adhered to just as they should be in the physical world. In the virtual world, “friend” or “follower” can mean anyone with whom you are willing to communicate through that medium. In the physical world, friend can mean much more in terms of intimacy, self-disclosure, mutuality and expectations for relationship.

9. Posting content

All content must be relevant, Christian in appearance and must comply with copyright legislation.

10. Using 'Zoom' or live streaming platforms safely

More detailed guidance on Safeguarding guidance for churches using video conferencing as part of their ministry can be found at this page from the Church of England Diocese of Exeter:

<https://exeter.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Guidance-on-safeguarding-while-using-videoconferencing-platforms-for-ministry-v1-1.docx>

11. Safeguarding

Laws regarding the reporting of suspected abuse/neglect/exploitation of children, youth, elders and vulnerable adults apply in the virtual world as they do in the physical world. Very clear boundaries must be maintained when communicating with children and young people. The law and policies on Safeguarding apply in communications with children and young people by whatever means, and Safeguarding guidelines apply fully online.

Communications should be public and in the view of whole groups, not individuals. Private messages should not be exchanged with young people via social media.

12. Emails

Face to face communication is always preferred, please try to speak to people face to face or via the telephone. When email is used, carefully check that you are representing what you trying to say in the best manner, keeping within the above guidelines. Make sure you are sending it to the correct recipient and for the right reason. Only write what you are comfortable to say face to face. Only copy other recipients into an email when it is expedient to do so. When sending an email to multiple recipients, always consider using BCC, known as Blind Carbon Copy. This is to avoid disclosing other people's e-mail addresses. Only use CC (Carbon Copy) if you purposefully want recipients to see all other copied recipients e-mail addresses. When replying to an email with visible multiple recipients, only 'reply to all' when the sender has asked you to do so. Replies should be personal and not public. Never copy recipients into a thread of emails. This is a quick way to lose confidentiality and cause damage. Emails are to be precise and easy to read.

13. Pictures

Photos, files and attachments will not be posted by members unless first vetted and authorised or unless written consent is given. Pictures of children should be discouraged, and prior permission needs to be obtained from parents or guardians.

14. Personal accounts

Personal social media accounts should be kept distinct from accounts relating to church roles and responsibilities and should be clearly labelled so that the views expressed cannot be taken to represent those of the Parish.

Nonetheless, church members administering online duties for the church should have due regard that their personal social media use is conducted in a manner consistent with their Christian character, this policy and church values and aims.

This guidance should be read alongside Christ Church Willaston's Safeguarding Policy. Any online concerns with regard to safeguarding should be reported immediately and in line with the Safeguarding Policy.

Other sources of useful guidance:

"Safe Environment and Activities Guidance"

<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-11/Safer%20Environment%20and%20Activities%20Oct19.pdf>

"Using Zoom for video meetings with young people"

<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-04/Being%20connected%20with%20ZOOM%20safely.pdf>

APPENDIX B	PARISH NEWS ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES
The magazine is published by Christ Church Willaston in Wirral PCC ten times a year and is delivered by annual subscription, individual purchase or free to specified locations, e.g. school, the dental and doctors' surgeries. According to the association of church magazine editors a church magazine should be: Communicating, informing, useful, readable and accessible to everyone in church and to the surrounding community. Not only containing church-related matters and promoting the Christian message in its content, the magazine is also an outreach and service - an important channel of communication to the wider village community on a wide range of matters of local interest.	
The editor is responsible to the incumbent and Christ Church Council (PCC) which is the proprietor of the magazine.	
Each 'month', the editor prepares and compiles material for inclusion.	
The editor, or designated representative is responsible for receiving material from a variety of sources e.g. new submitting organisations, local councillors etc. Additionally, the editor contacts organisations and church members regularly submitting articles etc by issuing reminders prior to the submission deadline.	
The editor, in discussion with the incumbent and churchwardens is responsible for promoting, within the magazine, Christ Church, its issues and Christian message whilst maintaining a balance of wider information which is of service and inclusive to the broader community.	
The editor must have internet access and be willing to receive emails.	
The editor is currently also the compiler so responsible for assembling the material into a formatted electronic document, as agreed by the Printers and forwards this to the Printers.	
Where necessary, the editor may write an article/s if unable to commission them. This should be compatible with Christ Church, Christian or Community interests.	
The editor will review material received and select items to be included, checking these for spelling and other errors, format these into the 'house style' and assemble them into a master document, sourcing illustrations as required.	
The editor is responsible for maintaining an agreed house style and standard.	
All published content must conform to the values described in the PCC communications policy and copyright regulations.	
The editor, with the agreement of the incumbent or churchwarden, may allow the promotion of charities beyond those designated in the communications policy, where these are associated with articles and village organisations.	
The editor should try to ensure photographs and articles give credit to their authors.	
The editor should gain the permission of those photographed before including such photographs in the magazine.	
The editor will compile the advertisements into a format acceptable to the printer them self, or with the aid of the printer's expertise.	

Advertising content must be approved by at least one Churchwarden.
Once compiled the editor should ensure the magazine is proofread by at least one other person
A draft copy should be sent to the incumbent and/or churchwarden before formatting to the printer's requirements.
The Printer, currently Inprint (Crewe) prints and assembles the required number of copies.
The completed magazines are delivered to the editor, or designated distributor.
The distributor maintains the subscription and free copy list.
The distributor/s divide them into bundles and gives these to the deliverers.
The deliverers deliver a copy to each subscribing household on their allocated round.
The Churchwarden/s or designated financial/advertising secretary is/are responsible for financial aspects of the advertising content, liaison with advertisers, and all financial aspects including invoicing advertisers, subscriptions and paying printing invoices.

Appendix C (a suggested example of good practice for change control)

Change Control

