

Social Media Policy



Church details

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This policy first adopted / last reviewed: 25/9/2025

This policy should be reviewed every two years. The next review is due in Sept 2027.

Policy Statement

The internet provides unique opportunities for the members of Bushey Baptist Church, paid staff, and volunteers to promote activities and events, share information and participate in interactive discussions on particular topics using a wide variety of social media, such as:

- Facebook
- Twitter
- Instagram
- WhatsApp
- YouTube

We actively encourage staff and volunteers to use these as mediums but also recognise that use of social media can potentially pose risks to confidential information and reputation of BBC.

To minimise these risks and to ensure that BBC's information and communications technology systems are used only for appropriate purposes.

We expect all staff, trustees and volunteers of the church to adhere to this policy at all times.

Introduction

This document sets out the policy and guidelines on how social media can be utilised by Bushey Baptist Church to support its strategic aims, while sensibly managing the risks. It covers the use of all forms of social media, internet postings and blogs. It applies to use of social media for work purposes as well as personal use where that may affect what the church does or its reputation.

This policy should be read alongside other church policies as appropriate and applies to all staff, including, Trustees, paid staff, volunteers, interns and anyone working on behalf of the church.

"Social media" is the broad term used for the set of online tools, websites and interactive media that enable users to interact with each other in various ways.

Social media is used regularly to communicate about Bushey Baptist Church's work, but staff and volunteers may also use social media for personal purposes. The separation between personal and professional use and views can be blurred on social media, and so while we recognise the value of the use of social media, we have certain standards, outlined in this policy, which we require everyone to observe.

Our overriding biblical principle in all our communications, including via social media, is to seek to speak the truth in love.

'Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.' Colossians 4:6 NIV

Aims of the policy

The aims of the policy are to:

- provide staff, trustees and volunteers with the overarching principles that guide the use of social media;
- to protect those who interact with the Church's activities and who make use of social media; and information technology as part of their involvement with us;
- ensure Church information remains secure and is not compromised; and
- ensure the Church's reputation is not damaged or adversely affected.

Who does this policy apply to?

This policy applies to staff, trustees, volunteers and anyone working on behalf of the church.

This policy applies to the use of social media for both professional and personal purposes, whether during working hours or otherwise, and regardless of whether the social media is accessed using Church equipment or personal equipment.

General principles

The following general principles apply:

- Personal email addresses (not church email accounts) should be used for personal social media accounts.
- When using social media for church-based activities then staff should use their church email address or work mobile for use in these accounts.
- Information shared on social media should be considered to be in the public domain, regardless of the privacy settings applied. Posts should be considered indelible – they will always exist somewhere once made.
- Respect and kindness should always be shown to others. Social media or other forms of communication should never be used to attack or abuse others; anything that could be considered discriminatory, defamatory, bullying or harassment should be avoided.
- The privacy and feelings of others should be respected; contact details or pictures, etc. of others should never be shared without their prior permission.
- Information which could, directly or indirectly, damage the Church's interests or compromise its reputation should not be shared.
- Confidential information about the church, its staff, members or attenders should not be revealed.

Breach of the policy

Breach of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

Disciplinary action may be taken regardless of whether the breach is committed during working hours, and regardless of whether Church equipment or facilities are used for the purpose of committing the breach.

Individuals may be required to remove internet and/or social media postings that are deemed to constitute a breach of this policy. Failure to comply with such a request may result in disciplinary action.

Specific guidance for staff

- Occasional personal use of social media during working hours is permitted so long as it does not involve unprofessional or inappropriate content, does not interfere with your employment responsibilities or productivity and complies with this policy.
- Social media should not be used in a way that breaches any of our other policies. If a communication would not be appropriate outside social media, using social media does not make it appropriate.
- In the course of your duties, social media must not be used to debate, challenge, promote or support any political/social/cultural ideology, movement, message or campaign other than matters that are consistent with and advance the church's Christian ethos or mission.
- Whether at work or otherwise, you should ensure that your profile and any content you post are consistent with our professional standards and do not harm your ability to act as an ambassador for us and for Jesus Christ.
- Unless it forms part of your duties or is consistent with and advances our Christian ethos and mission, you should not use social media (whether at work or otherwise) in a way that we can be identified or that you could be perceived as speaking, or acting, on our behalf.
- Personal social media accounts should indicate that all views or opinions shared are your own as you can be reasonably associated with the church by your position
- If you are uncertain or concerned about the appropriateness of any statement or posting, refrain from posting it until you have discussed it with your Line Manager.
- If you see social media content that disparages or reflects poorly on us, you should inform your Line Manager.

Using social media on behalf of the church

Social media is used by Bushey Baptist Church to promote and share information about our activities and work.

Tiago Cruz is responsible for setting up and managing Bushey Baptist Church's social media channels. Only those authorised to do so by Tiago Cruz will have access to these accounts.

All social media content should have a clear purpose and bring value to our audience.

Where individuals seek to challenge, question or debate content posted or the activities or beliefs of the church, staff or those working on behalf of the church should not seek to respond publicly on social media platforms but, where a question appears to be genuine, should respond privately via email, by phone or face to face.

Care should be taken with the presentation of content: making sure that there are no typos, misspellings or grammatical errors, the information shared is accurate, the images are clear and licensed for use and graphics follow our branding guidance.

Content about individuals, including images, must not be shared without their express permission. If using interviews, videos or photos that clearly identify a child or young person, staff must ensure they have the explicit written consent of a parent or guardian before using them on social media.

Staff and volunteers should refrain from offering personal opinions via the church's social media accounts, either directly by commenting or indirectly by 'liking', 'sharing' or 'reposting'.

Individuals should not set up other social media channels on behalf of Bushey Baptist Church or that purport to be on behalf of the charity.

If a complaint is made on Bushey Baptist Church's social media channels, advice should be sought from the social media controller at the church before responding. If they are not available, then they should speak to the minister(s).

Social media for Bushey Baptist Church groups and ministries

Groups or ministries operating as part of Bushey Baptist Church may have their own social media accounts to communicate with participants and share information about their events.

These accounts should make clear their association with Bushey Baptist Church and follow the guidance in this policy, particularly that related to using social media on behalf of the church.

Adults working with children or young people must not communicate with them via their personal social media accounts. All communication must be conducted through official church channels or designated ministry accounts, and always in a transparent, accountable manner.

Any digital communication must be group-based where possible, and any one-to-one communication must be logged and accessible to the Safeguarding Lead.

Exceptions may only be made with prior approval from the Safeguarding Lead and with parental awareness. Adults must never initiate private, one-to-one messaging with children or young

people outside these guidelines. All communication should remain open, accountable and appropriate at all times.