

**THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF THE
ECCLESIASTICAL PARISH OF ST GEORGE'S
HANWORTH**

REGISTERED CHARITY NUMBER 1132311

**SOCIAL MEDIA
POLICY**

January 2019

Preamble

This protocol has been written as a result of the exponential growth in use of electronic media, including blogs, social networking sites, web based email services and text messaging. It is deliberately all-encompassing and readers must be aware that the document refers to all electronic means of communications including text messaging and the distribution of images. All communication, including social media, is covered by libel law. If any person is in doubt and seeks further clarification on any point, they should contact the Churchwardens or Parish Priest.

1. Introduction

1.1 Online collaboration platforms are fundamentally changing the way clergy and paid employees work and engage with each other, clients and partners. Social media is interactive, conversational and open-ended.

1.2 The parish of St George Hanworth is exploring how online discourse through social media networking can empower the clergy, staff and volunteers of the Parish of St George Hanworth to spread the gospel message and engage more fully the people of God.

1.3 Social media is faster, cheaper and arguably more widely available than traditional media and our understanding of confidentiality, responsibility and Christian witness must remain the same.

1.4 It is in the interest of the Parish of St George, Hanworth, to be aware of and participate in this sphere of information, interaction and idea exchange.

1.5 The Parish of St George Hanworth regards blogs and other forms of online discourse as primarily a form of communication and relationship among individuals. When the Parish wishes to communicate publicly as an entity, whether internally or externally, we have a well-established means to do so. Only those designated by the PCC has the authorization to speak on behalf of the Parish.

1.6 The Parish of St George, Hanworth, trusts and expects paid employees and members of the clergy alike to exercise personal responsibility whenever they participate in social media. This includes not violating the trust of those with whom they are engaging. Neither paid employees nor clergy should use these media for covert marketing or public relations.

1.7 If you have any confusion about whether you ought to publish something online, please either refer to this document, contact the Churchwardens or the Parish Priest.

1.8 Notwithstanding the above, it is important that proper boundaries are established and clearly understood.

2. Introduction

2.1 If you comment on any aspect of the work, or policy issue, of the Church of England or the Parish of St George, Hanworth, you must clearly identify yourself as the Parish Priest of, or a paid employee of, the Parish of St George, Hanworth, in your postings or blog site(s). Please include a disclaimer that the views are your own and not those of the Church of England or the Parish of St George, Hanworth.

2.2 Should the comment be about a hobby or non-work related topic then clearly there is no potential for professional bias coming into play and hopefully not conflict of interest.

2.3 The same is also true of leaving comments on other blogs. If it is a subject related to the Church of England or the Parish of St George, Hanworth, then the person posting their comment must identify themselves and their connection with the Church of England or the Parish. In these matters

transparency is everything because it can be damaging if an employee is discovered trying to pull the wool over the eyes of others. The impact on the reputation of the Church of England the Parish of St George, Hanworth, can be equally damaging.

2.4 Paid employees including members of the Clergy who deliberately fail to take the Parish Policy into account may face disciplinary measures.

2.5 You should be clear about who you are. When discussing topics relevant to the Church of England and the Parish of St George, Hanworth, you must use your real name. If you have a vested interest in something you are discussing, be the first to point it out. Protect yourself and your privacy. What you publish will be around for a long time, so consider the content carefully and also be judicious in disclosing personal details.

2.6 The lines between public and private, personal and professional are blurred in online social networks. By virtue of identifying yourself as an employee of the Parish of St George, Hanworth, or a member of the clergy, within a social network, you are now connected to your colleagues and the global Christian community. You should ensure that content associated with you is consistent with your work and the Christian values of love, tolerance and forgiveness.

3. Social Networking Guidelines

3.1 Be a good ambassador for Christ, the Church and your part in it.

3.2 Know and follow the Child Protection Policy of St George, Hanworth. This includes the transmission and publication of images of young people.

3.3 Users are personally responsible for the content they publish online, whether in a blog, social media site, or any other form of user-generated media. Be mindful that what you publish will be public for an indefinite period of time. Protect your privacy and take care to understand a site's terms of service.

3.4 Identify yourself by name and, when relevant, role in the Parish of St George, Hanworth. If you discuss the Parish of St George, Hanworth, you must make it clear that you are speaking for yourself and not on behalf of the Church of England, or the Parish of St George, Hanworth.

3.5 If you publish content online relevant to the Parish of St George, Hanworth, or the Church of England, in your personal capacity, use a disclaimer like: "The postings on this site are my own and don't necessarily represent the view of the Parish of St George, Hanworth or the Church of England."

3.6 Respect copyright.

3.7 Respect libel and defamation laws.

3.8 Never provide details of confidential matters.

3.9 Do not cite or reference individuals without their approval. If you are telling a story about a third party, ask yourself, "is this my story to tell?"

3.10 When you do make a reference, link back to the source. Don't publish anything that might allow inferences to be drawn which could embarrass or damage an individual.

3.11 Respect your audience. Don't use ethnic slurs, personal insults, obscenity, or engage in any conduct that would not be acceptable in a Christian environment or Church of England work place.

3.12 Don't pick fights.

3.13 Be the first to correct your own mistakes.

3.14 Try to add value. Provide worthwhile information and perspective. The Church of England is best represented by its people and what you publish may reflect on not only the Church but also Christianity.

3.15 Don't use Parish or Church of England logos or trademarks unless approved to do so. If you do use them, please obtain the correct permissions and follow brand guidelines.

3.16 Social media entries may well attract wider media interest in you as an individual. Proceed with caution and remember that you are responsible for your on-line activities.

3.17 A duty of care must be exercised when communicating your interacting with any minor, under 18, or vulnerable adult. All clergy, staff and volunteers will exercise strict professionalism and refer to the Parish's Child Protection Policy to ensure a safe, transparent, and accountable online experience.

**The Parochial Church Council of the Ecclesiastical Parish of St George's Hanworth
will revise and review this policy regularly.**

Approved at the PCC meeting on 07/01/2019
Review date: 01/01/2020

Signature:

Poistion:

Date: 07/01/2019