

The Parish of Guildford Emmanuel, St Francis and St Clare – Digital Communications Policy

Policy Title	Digital Communications policy
Lead:	Liz Deutsch
Reviewed by:	PSO and PCC
Date Policy Implemented:	20 th October 2025
Review Date for Policy	October 2026
Related Policies and Documents:	Safeguarding Policy; Photo & Video Policy; GDPR/Privacy Policy

Version	Reason for Review	Amendment Notes	Approved by	Date approved
1.0	New policy	n/a	Emmanuel PCC	11 May 2020
2.0	Reviewed in line with Safeguarding requirements	Section 4 and 5: Incumbent/ Wardens stated as 'Responsible person' to comply with Diocesan Safeguarding requirement Appendix B: Minor updates to Church online details, due to staff changes	Emmanuel PCC	10 Jan 2022
3.0	Reviewed with reference to Guildford Diocese Social Media Policy	Diocesan Social Media Policy added to Appendix B, referenced in the Policy Statement	Emmanuel PCC	13 March 2023
4.0	Reviewed following set up of Comms Plan	Noted change of staff; merged 'Kids' FB; noted feedback from PCC	PCC	NOV 2023
5.0	Review following Parish Merger	Update Policy Name, review for GEFC Parish, addition of St Clare & St Francis	PCC	20 OCT 2025

General Governance Notes:

- All Parish policies will be reviewed annually and re-approved by the PCC Guildford EFC where there are necessary changes, noting where legislation, regulations or guidelines from relevant governing authorities require review and update (eg updates from the Diocese, CoFE policies).
- The Policy lead will ensure a master copy of the policy will be kept in the central folder in the Parish Office and digitally available for staff and volunteers to review.
- All other copies of the policy (reproduced in part or as a whole) will be kept up to date, in line with the latest master.

For reference only: List of legislation, regulations and guidance impacting this policy:

- General Data Protection Regulations (2018)
- Safeguarding Guidelines & Policy – Guildford Diocese
- Copyright legislation (2014)
- Equality Act (2010)

NB: Legislation and guidance applicable to this policy are noted in the following pages:

1. CONTEXT

Please state the reasons why this policy is required; noting any legislative or regulatory compliance

- To ensure all digital content (including website and social media presence) is consistent with the ethos and character of Emmanuel Church, as set out in the Brand Guidelines (Canva) and Comm’s Master Planner, in order to protect the reputational integrity of the Church.
- St Francis and St Clare to generate their own Communication Plan and Brand Guidelines to suit their specific Church character and setting.
- To ensure the nature and tone of the content is in line with the Church of England Community Guidelines for social media (Appendix A)
- To ensure that PCC GEFC continues to comply with legislative, regulatory and Diocesan policy and guidelines that may apply online in particular: Diocesan Safeguarding Guidance and where relevant, aspects of GDPR (See GEFC Privacy Policy) and Social Media Policy of Diocese of Guildford (Appendix B)
- To ensure each church authorised social media platforms are set-up and run in-line with the service providers rules of engagement.
- The church takes no liability for personally run accounts.

2. SCOPE

Please state the people groups that this policy applies to

- The policy applies to all staff and church members who have permission to generate or administer any communications or online content on behalf of Emmanuel, St Francis and St Clare’s Church (including social media, website and print materials etc).
- Where possible, users of the sites will also be encouraged to be mindful of the Church of England Community Guidelines for social media and Diocese of Guildford policy for social media.

3. POLICY STATEMENT

Please state the main purpose/aims for this policy

GEFC Parish will:

- Communications will support the missional vision “Our vision is Jesus; To know Him better and make Him better known” – providing useful and relevant information to the target audiences involved.
- Comply with the Church of England charter ‘Community Guidelines for Social Media’ (See Appendix A)
- Comply with the Diocese of Guildford Social Media Policy (See Appendix B)
- Comply with associated policies on safeguarding and photography in church around young or vulnerable members of the community – only posting photographs where the required permission has been provided
- Regularly manage and remove old photographs and old content to ensure that information is up to date and relevant; avoiding where possible any breach of GDPR (e.g. blocking out car number plates on photos, blocking name stickers, blurring faces when photo permission has not been granted);
- Review online presence to ‘delete’ old social media accounts and websites, ensure ongoing relevance of current sites and only create new accounts where key requirements are identified, as agreed with the Incumbent (or Wardens) and/or PCC.
- Review and report any irregularities through line management.

4. POLICY PROCEDURES

Please list the key procedures to undertake this policy

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| 4.1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The Incumbent (or Wardens) will act as the ‘responsible person’ in line with Diocesan Safeguarding guidance. ● New digital channels will be approved by the Incumbent (or Wardens if Incumbent role vacant); and the list of current channels will be reviewed annually to ensure they are serving and supporting |
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	the Parish ministry.
4.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current sites will be managed by designated ‘Site Administrators’ who will ensure the site is secure, maintained and the content is in line with other church communications, relevant to the audience and compliant with the Church of England Community Guidelines for Social Media (Appendix A) and Diocese of Guildford Social Media Policy (Appendix B). • This will be in line with the Comms Plan and ‘brand guidance’ to proactively promote Church communications with members and local community.
4.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site Administrators will notify the Incumbent/Wardens of any significant new content on social media and inform of any inappropriate feedback that may appear on social media, etc. • With agreement of the incumbent, if required, the Site Administrator may ‘delete’ comments left on social media platforms that may be deemed harmful to the Church or its members or may in any way be considered inappropriate – whilst at the same time ensuring respect for the author of such comments.

5. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Please list the roles and responsibilities of key staff/volunteers in relation this policy

5.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PCC will be kept informed of the current status of online sites annually (listed in Appendix B); or sooner, should a situation arise requiring PCC advice or approval (e.g. the creation of a new updated website). • The PCC will review and approve any updates or amendments to this policy every year. • Operations Director currently leading on Comms to act as PCC Rep.
5.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incumbent (or Wardens in the absence of Incumbent) will act as the Responsible Person and will approve/delegate responsibilities to ‘Site Administrators’ to set up and manage each online platform to suitable member of staff or church members. • At key times the Incumbent/Wardens may be required to approve key important messages – (e.g. in the event of a national emergency). • The Incumbent may appoint one Site Administrator to act as a coordinator to support and review online communications.
5.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site Administrators will manage and review the sites listed in line with relevant Church policies; ensuring information is relevant to the audience, friendly in tone and up to date – liaising with the Incumbent, Wardens or any designated coordinator, as required. • Site Administrators will also manage site security – noting passwords, access rights, in line with agreed church practice. • Where possible – the Site Administrators will encourage their ‘audience’ (Users including Church Members and members of the local community), to be mindful of the Church of England Community Guidelines for social media • The Office Administrators will meet together termly to provide mutual support and ensure communications are in line with Parish requirements.

6. COMMUNICATION PLAN

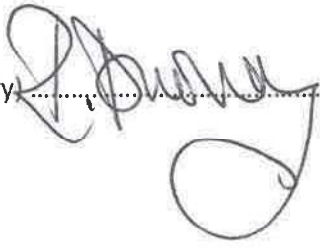
Please state how the content of this policy will be communicated to those involved

6.1	The latest Policy will be circulated to all designated Site Administrators – either via email or hard copy
6.2	The Master copy of the Policy will be held centrally in each Church Office for reference
6.3	The Church of England Community Guidelines for Social Media and Guildford Diocese Social Media Policy are available online and links can be communicated to relevant parties as relevant (Copy also attached as part of this policy)

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The GEFC PCC hereby approves this policy.

Signed (Incumbent)  Date 2/11/25

Signed (PCC Secretary)  Date 23/10/25

APPENDIX A

COMMUNITY GUIDELINES FOR SOCIAL MEDIA FROM CHURCH OF ENGLAND –

<https://www.churchofengland.org/terms-and-conditions/our-social-media-community-guidelines>

The Church of England community guidelines have been created to encourage conversations that reflect our values. They apply to all content posted on the national social media accounts run by the Church of England, the Archbishop of Canterbury and Archbishop of York.

Social media is a very public way of enabling us as Christians to live out our calling to share the good news of Jesus Christ. One of its many joys is that it is immediate, interactive, conversational and open-ended. This opportunity comes with a number of downsides if users do not apply the same common sense, kindness and sound judgement that we would use in a face-to-face encounter.

While written specifically for all users who engage with the Church of England's and Archbishops' national social media channels, these guidelines are built on universal principles. They are a resource for Christians, people of other faiths and people of no faith. Dioceses and local churches across the Church of England are welcome and encouraged to adopt them.

By engaging with the Church of England and Archbishops' social media accounts, you agree to:

- **Be safe.** The safety of children, young people and vulnerable adults must be maintained. If you have any concerns, refer to the Church Safeguarding Officer
- **Be respectful.** Do not post or share content that is sexually explicit, inflammatory, hateful, abusive, threatening or otherwise disrespectful.
- **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 the respective company.

If you have any questions, please contact us at digital@churchofengland.org.

Reviewed October 2025

APPENDIX B

Social Media Policy – Diocese of Guildford (reviewed October 2025)

Updated April 2020

This policy applies to all employees of the Diocesan Board of Finance. It is good practice guidance for Clergy and other office holders, or those with a representative role, within the Diocese of Guildford.

Our approach

Social media is immediate, interactive, conversational and open-ended. This is different from other forms of communication. We have less control, less time and sometimes less information, but we still need to engage and engage well. This means we need to think differently in how we use it, what we say and where we say it.

The Diocese of Guildford believes that social media offers a great opportunity for our churches, chaplaincies, schools and communities. In this digital age, where communities are forming online, we need to be part of the conversation. It is a way for our churches, schools, hospitals and others to branch out beyond their physical boundaries to meet people where they want to be met and be ambassadors for our faith.

This opportunity is not without risks but if people apply the same common sense, kindness and sound judgement that we would use in a face-to-face encounter, social media can be a tool harnessed for good.

'Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may.' **Ephesians 4:29**

Our policy

The Diocese of Guildford has signed up to the www.churchofengland.org/resources/digital-charter and adopted their universal principle based Social media Community Guidelines. We believe that our social media channels and individuals own channels should always be run in a way that reflect our values.

As Christians, the same principles that guide our offline conversations should apply to those that take place online. Interacting through social media does not change our understanding of confidentiality, responsibility and Christian witness. Our actions should be consistent with our work and Christian values and every individual is responsible for the things they do, say or write. Our conversation should be *'seasoned with salt'* (**Colossians 4:6**), and these guidelines aim to help us to do so.

- **Be safe.** The safety of children, young people and vulnerable adults must be maintained and is of paramount importance. If you have any concerns, ask our diocesan safeguarding adviser.
- **Protect yourself.** Never share personal details like a home address and phone numbers, except with someone you know and trust. If you decide to do so 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 and once given can be shared by the recipient. This policy sits alongside the [Diocesan Media policy](#) and within the [Electronic Communications Policy](#).
- **Protect information: respect confidentiality, copyright, data protection and legal frameworks.**
 - o The existence of social media does not change the Church's understanding of confidentiality however breaking confidentiality over social media can see information spread with alarming speed.

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- o Do not share sensitive information to which you might be a privileged party this would include confidential details provided during Bishop’s Council; Diocesan Synod, information shared under Chatham House Rules etc.
- **Be respectful.** Do not post or share content that is sexually explicit, inflammatory, hateful, abusive, threatening or otherwise disrespectful.
- **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. **Proverbs 12:25**
- **Disagree well.** Some conversations can be places of robust disagreement and it’s important we apply our values in the way we express them. Disagreement is not a bad thing but disagreeing well – respecting other opinions and being kind - can make a massive difference in how we engage with others.
- **Be honest.** Don’t mislead people about who you are and identify yourself, especially if you are commenting on topics that your identity may change how your comment could be perceived.
- **Take responsibility.** You are accountable for the things you do, say and write.
 - o Be aware that what you say may attract media interest in you as an individual, especially if perceived that you are acting in an official capacity (even if it's your personal view). If you have any doubts, ask for advice from the Communications Team.
 - o Text and images shared can be public and permanent, even with privacy settings in place.
 - o If you’re not sure, don’t post it and seek guidance.
- **Be a good ambassador.** Personal and professional life can easily become blurred online. As an ambassador for Christ and the Church make sure you 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.
- **Credit others.** Acknowledge the work of others. At times we don’t need to reinvent the wheel, but we must acknowledge where the ideas came from.
 - o Respect copyright and always credit where it is due.
 - o Be careful not to release sensitive or confidential information and always question the source of any content you are considering amplifying.
- **Is it your story to tell?** Consider whether this is someone else’s story or voice that should be heard? This policy sits alongside the [Diocesan Media policy](#) and within the [Electronic Communications Policy](#).
- **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 the respective company.

Enjoy it. It’s often easy to focus on the challenges rather than the opportunities of social media but by following these safe guidelines you can enjoy engaging with many different people across the globe, of all faiths and none, and on all topics.

Acknowledgement

These guidelines have been compiled to help clergy, office holders and employees of the Diocese of Guildford fulfil their role as online ambassadors for their local parish, the wider Church and our Christian faith. These are based on the best practice from the Diocese of Gloucester, Worcester, Exeter, Church of England and the Methodist Church

[Link to Social Media Guidance www.cofeguildford.org.uk/using-social-media/](http://www.cofeguildford.org.uk/using-social-media/)

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