

## Introduction

Social media and the internet have become an increasing influence on many people's lives. For many younger people it may have become a primary source for gaining information about the world around them and networking with friends and acquaintances.

Used responsibly social media and the internet can be of benefit to the church, providing the opportunity for networking, getting to know people, gaining and sharing information about church events, learning about the Christian Faith, and spreading the Gospel. Social media is faster, cheaper and arguably more widely available than traditional media. However our understanding of confidentiality, responsibility and Christian witness must remain the same.

Social media is the umbrella term used to describe websites and applications that allow users to share content (that is words, images and web links) with others and/or to participate in social networking. The best-known platforms are Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, TikTok and YouTube, but the term and these guidelines also cover online forums and blogs as well as less well-known applications.

Social media is interactive, conversational and open-ended. It happens in a public, not private, space and though it feels different to traditional forms of written communication comments are permanent and we are personally liable for them. Due to the swift, conversational style of social media, writing comments we may later regret is a common pitfall. It is here that the words of Colossians 4.6 serve us well.

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

Our words, whether in person or via a social media platform, must always be full of grace so that even in difficult situations we will know how to answer well.

Godmanchester Baptist Church is committed to being a Christian presence on all media platforms. Therefore, we have specific appointed individuals who have the responsibility to monitor and post on our channels.

Any external to GBC media interactivity needs to be agreed by the minister for example an article in local or national newspapers. Only those authorised by the Leadership Team can speak on behalf of GBC. If any content that GBC has posted attracts wider media interest then, if needed, we will take advice from the Baptist Union Media department.

## What members of the church can expect from GBC media posts

- GBC Social media platforms will be monitored and managed by trustworthy individuals who understand the power of social media and who will respond quickly and appropriately to any comments.
- Posts will be regular, informative, up to date and reflect the general values of GBC.
- Individuals will not be identified on any posts made by GBC unless specific permission is gained.
- Church family news will not be shared on GBC pages unless specific permission is gained.
- Any images whether pictures or video that are used will be checked for copyright before using.

## What the church expects from its members when interacting on social media

If you have a known public role at GBC then, when you post, you are posting as a representative of your church. This applies whether you're posting in an official capacity on a church account or on your personal account - you are representing your church and cannot hide behind statements made on personal social media accounts. What you say privately (and social media is far from being a private forum!) will reflect on you, GBC and the whole Christian community. When interacting on social media:

- Please stay on-topic
- No offensive language
- No personal attacks (hostile, derogatory or deliberately insulting comments toward a specific individual or group)
- Don't say things to people in a way that you wouldn't want them said to you.
- No bullying, intimidation or hate speech.
- No flaming (posting comments intended to induce an angry response)
- No spamming
- Be respectful of theological viewpoints you do not agree with. Public slanging matches between Christians are never a good thing.
- Respect the privacy of other members.
- Before you share good news of church life and congregation members – first check that the particular person/people involved is/are happy for the news of their engagement/pregnancy/marriage/ anniversary/recovery from illness etc to become public. Before posting ask yourself: 'Is this my story to tell?' And if it's not, then ask permission first.
- Don't friend/follow/interact with children/young people on social media. This is not appropriate just because you all attend the same church.
- Never post photos of people at a church event without permission from the individuals.

**Adopted:** October 2021

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