



Social Media Policy

INDEX

1. Introduction	2
2. What is social media?	3
3. The benefits of social media	3
4. Are there any excluded applications/platforms?	4
5. Who does this policy apply to?	4
6. Breach of this policy	4
7. Submitting a complaint	4
7.1 Who can submit a complaint?	4
7.2 How to submit a complaint	4
7.3 What happens after the complaint has been received?	5
8. What is the scope of this policy?	5
9. General guidance	5
10. Specific guidance	6
11. Other policies	8
12. Where can I get further guidance?	8
APPENDIX A: Users currently approved on social media platforms	9
APPENDIX B: Social Media Content Complaint Form	10

1. Introduction

1.1 As representatives of Christ and Castle Hill Baptist Church, our online presence should reflect the same integrity, compassion and truth that we show in person. This reinforces the theological purpose of this policy.

At Castle Hill Baptist Church (hereafter, ‘the church’) the use of social media is seen as a valuable tool to engage with the worshipping church and wider community. This aligns with our mission statement: “to be a beacon of hope in Warwick and beyond.”

1.2 This policy aims to guide all staff, volunteers and representatives of the church in using our social media presence in ways that honour Christ, protects the church community and our wider community and builds a positive witness online. It is also designed to promote safe spaces for open conversation and to build community and dialogue within the church by using social media platforms.

1.3 Social media is now freely used across nearly all age ranges and may include platforms such as Facebook, X (formerly twitter), Instagram, Snapchat, WhatsApp and Tiktok. It also includes joining web page discussions/forums and live streamed content.

1.4 Currently, the church uses Facebook, Messenger, Instagram, WhatsApp, Zoom chat, email, text, web page discussions and YouTube; however, as we develop more presence across other platforms the principles of this policy will still apply.

1.5 As a church, it is important that our engagement on social media is appropriate, responsible and in accordance with our safeguarding policy. The church expects the use of social media to maintain the high standards detailed later in this policy. We also recognise the need to safeguard against any potential risks, which may include:

- forming inappropriate relationships
- making offensive, sexual or suggestive comments
- blurring the boundaries between public work/ministry and private life
- grooming and impersonation
- bullying and harassment

1.6 This policy is a living document which reflects the current needs of the church. It will be reviewed annually, or sooner if legislation or safeguarding guidance changes, or when a significant new social media platform is adopted by the church.

2. What is social media?

2.1 The Baptist Union states that “social media” is an umbrella term used for describing websites and applications which allow users to share content (texts, images, videos, web links) and/or to participate in social networking.¹

2.2 In this policy, “social media” refers to all online communication which is conducted in a public or semi-public space. This includes, but is not limited to: blogs, Facebook, Messenger, WhatsApp, email and other digital platforms which provide a public or semi-public chat function (such as Zoom, including breakout meeting rooms).

3. The benefits of social media

3.1 The Baptist Together guidance highlights that, when used well, social media can be an effective communication tool for providing online spaces for conversations, wider exploration, learning and discussion on issues of faith, church and society. It also offers further opportunities to form and deepen relationships both locally and globally.

3.2 The church encourages the use of social media tools as a means of extending our engagement with people inside and outside of our church. This includes:

- sharing our stories
- engaging in conversations ‘where people are’
- sharing, learning and encouraging
- reaching those who cannot physically attend church
- forming and deepening relationships locally and globally.

3.3 However, communicating and engaging via a screen does not alter or change our responsibilities regarding confidentiality, good manners, safeguarding or our Christian witness. We still need to comply with our church safeguarding procedures, GDPR and data protection regulations and these remain essential at all times.

¹ “Guidelines for the Use of Social Media by Baptist Ministers”, Baptists Together, 2023.

4. Are there any excluded applications/platforms?

4.1 Software applications, such as Snapchat, that routinely delete information and files/ attachments shared after they are seen are not permitted for official church use.

5. Who does this policy apply to?

5.1 This policy applies to all paid staff and volunteers, including the Operations Manager, Church Secretary, Minister, Deacons, Members, other ministry leaders and volunteers.

5.2 It covers all official church social media accounts and personal accounts when referencing Castle Hill Baptist Church (in any form) or by acting in a church related role. Staff and volunteers should make clear when views expressed on personal accounts are their own and do not represent the official views of Castle Hill Baptist Church. For example: "Views expressed are my own and not necessarily those of Castle Hill Baptist Church."

5.3 This policy applies to the management of user-generated content which is submitted / created by the church across all its official social media channels.

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

6. Breach of this policy

6.1 Any breach of this policy will be treated as a serious matter and addressed appropriately. Depending on the nature of the breach, this may include action under the church complaints policy, referral to the Safeguarding Lead, or in serious cases, reporting to the police or other statutory authorities.

7. Submitting a complaint

7.1 Who can submit a complaint?

To be entitled to submit a complaint, you, or someone else you are legally responsible for, must be the harmed party or one of the harmed parties.

7.2 How to submit a complaint

You should submit your complaint in writing using the complaint form at APPENDIX B of this document. Alternatively, you can request a paper copy from the Church Office.

Upon completion of a paper form, it should be given to the Church Secretary or the Operations Manager, who will ensure it reaches the Appointed Person. An electronic version will automatically be sent to the right person.

7.3 What happens after the complaint has been received?

On receipt of your complaint, two of the following (Minister, Church Secretary, Social Media Lead) will agree if a post needs removing immediately, if comments need to be stopped or if an official response needs to be posted.

Should anyone express a comment that may be misconstrued as representing the church's official views, we reserve the right to do any / all of the following: request the post be taken down, request clarity be added to show it is not an official church view, make an official church post clarifying our official position, add a general statement to the conversation.

In both cases, the church complaints procedure will then be followed.

8. What is the scope of this policy?

8.1 This policy ensures that all aspects of our communication are lawful, consistent with our Christian character, values and within the mission of the church. Our Christian faith is rooted in communication – the word, both written and spoken. It is vital we remember that electronic communication is now a central part of everyday life.

8.2 It is vital any changes or policy updates are communicated effectively in order to maintain consistency for all our church groups. It is also recognised that whilst social media offers a lot of benefits, it also comes with a number of risks, which are addressed in the guidance and responsibilities set out below. This policy outlines how these risks can be minimised and mitigated.

8.3 A list of approved church activities using social media in the name of the church, and those who are authorised to oversee this work, can be found in Appendix A.

9. General guidance

9.1 We strive to reflect Christ in all we say and do, including online.

- “Let your conversations be always full of grace” (Colossians 4:6)
- “Whatever you do.....do all for the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31)

9.2 Having a social media presence is an extension of church life. Expectations remain as high in this context as they would be in any other situation. Always ensure you comply with copyright, privacy, safeguarding and child protection laws at all times. In general, those engaging online will conduct themselves in a Christian manner and demonstrate the following values at all times:

9.2.1. Be safe

The safety of children, young people and vulnerable adults must be maintained and prioritised at all times. Any concerns should be raised with the church Safeguarding Lead (see Section 12). Leaders must not engage in private one-to-one messaging with under-18s on personal social media accounts. Communication with young people should occur through official group channels where another leader is present. Parents and Carers should be aware of communication channels used in line with our Safeguarding policy. Images or videos of children must only be shared where written consent has been provided.

9.2.2 Be respectful

Do not post or share content that is sexually explicit, inflammatory, hateful, abusive or threatening. Discriminatory language or references relating to race, gender, disability, religion or other protected characteristics will not be tolerated. Avoid divisive debates, political fights, gossip, or insults.

9.2.3 Be kind

Treat others as you would wish to be treated (Matthew 7:12). Always assume the best in people. Consider your tone carefully, particularly when offering criticism or disagreement.

9.2.4 Be honest

Be honest and clear about who you are and don't mislead people about who you are. Do not misrepresent yourself or the church.

9.2.5 Be responsible

You are accountable for what you say and share. The content posted online can be public and permanent, even with privacy settings enabled. Do not share personal data, private information, prayer requests, counselling matters and/or pastoral issues without explicit consent. Private pastoral or safeguarding information must never be discussed online. Administrators must ensure data collected through social media complies with GDPR and church privacy policies. If in doubt, do not post.

9.2.6 Be a good ambassador

Personal and professional boundaries can easily blur online. Think carefully before you post. Communicate with kindness, patience and humility.

9.2.7 *Disagree well*

Disagreements should always be handled graciously and respectfully. The church should always avoid engaging in online arguments that may disrupt harmony and may cause offence or distress.

9.2.8 Be truthful

It is important to always acknowledge the work of others, to credit where content has come from and, as far as possible, to verify the information being shared (this includes posts, images, videos and music). It is also imperative that we respect copyright and post in accordance with any license agreement and that we respect other people's work as well as our own. If unsure, always check. In the same way, do not post rumours or internal church issues.

10. Specific guidance

10.1 Governance and Management of Accounts

All official social media accounts must be approved by the Deacons. Each social media account must have at least two authorised administrators. Account access must be held in the church password register or with the Operations Manager. If a staff member or volunteer leaves their role, access must be removed immediately. The church reserves the right to remove or amend any content posted on official channels. This protects the church if someone leaves suddenly.

It is important that church representatives do not engage in arguments online and respond politely where it is appropriate. Moderators should remove obvious spam, abusive, offensive or discriminatory comments and block repeat offenders (if necessary). If you're unsure, or if a complaint or concern is raised, this should be escalated inline with guidance in section 10.5.

10.2 Governance and Management of Group Messaging Platforms

Group messaging platforms (such as WhatsApp and Messenger) are widely used within the church for communication between ministry teams, house groups and other church communities. While these tools are valuable for building community and coordinating church life, they carry specific risks which require clear guidance.

10.2.1 Setting up and managing groups

The group's purpose should be clearly stated when it is set up, and membership should be limited to those with a legitimate reason to be included. Administrators are responsible for deciding who may be added to the group; members should not add new participants without the administrator's prior agreement. A review of those in the group should happen every year.

Additionally, the following disclaimer should be posted within the description of the group:

"This group is for Castle Hill Baptist Church updates and church-related communication only. By staying in the Group, you consent to your phone number being visible to other Group members and agree to follow the Church's social media policy and any other applicable policy (e.g., safeguarding). Please post respectfully, keep messages relevant, and avoid sharing sensitive or confidential information. No political content, advertising, or inappropriate material. Safeguarding rules apply: no 1-to-1 messaging with under-18s. Admins may remove posts or members if needed. If you wish to leave, you may do so at any time."

If you need help implementing this, please speak to the Social Media Lead / do a search on Google.

10.2.2 House Group chats

House group leaders are responsible for overseeing their group's WhatsApp chat. This includes managing membership, setting expectations around confidentiality at the outset, and monitoring the group for any content which may require further action. Members should be reminded that conversations within the group are confidential and should not be shared outside it without consent. If a concern arises - whether safeguarding-related or otherwise - the house group leader should follow the appropriate church policy and escalate to the Minister, Deacons or Safeguarding Lead as required. A review of those in the group should happen every year.

10.2.3 Ministry and Team group chats

Group chats used by church Teams (such as property, pastoral, youth leaders and others) should be managed in the same way as 10.2.2. The lead person in the relevant team should take responsibility for administration, or should designate a named administrator.

10.2.4 Group chats with under 18s

At present, no official church group chats are known to include under-18s. Should this change, additional safeguards must be put in place before any such group is created. Private one-to-one messaging with under-18s on any platform is not permitted (see 9.2.1).

10.2.5 Pastoral conversations

Group messaging platforms are not appropriate for pastoral conversations or the sharing of sensitive personal information. Where a pastoral matter arises in a group chat, it should be moved to a private and appropriate setting as quickly as possible, in line with the church's pastoral and safeguarding policies.

10.3 AI-Generated Content

The use of AI tools to assist with social media content (such as image generation, caption writing or video editing) is permitted, but all AI-generated content must be reviewed by an authorised administrator before posting. AI-generated imagery must not include identifiable individuals. Where AI tools have been used significantly in creating content, this should be disclosed. All AI use remains subject to copyright, GDPR and safeguarding obligations as set out in this policy and elsewhere.

10.4 Photography and Media Consent

Consent must be obtained before posting identifiable images of all individuals. Parental consent must be obtained before posting images of children. Individuals have the right to request removal of images at any time. Photographs taken during worship or events should respect individuals who have opted out.

10.5 Use of personal social media (for paid staff)

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.

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.

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.

Employees must be aware that the use of social media sites in a manner contrary to this policy, including if others implicate them in a breach of any of the terms listed above, may result in disciplinary action which could ultimately result in dismissal.

11. Other policies

11.1 This policy should not be read in isolation from the other policies of the church. In particular, this policy should be read alongside the church's safeguarding and complaints policies.

12. Where can I get further guidance?

12.1 If you have a safeguarding concern (under 18s or adults at risk), please either call (01926) 459640 and select option 3 or visit <https://warwickbaptists.org.uk/safe> for further contact information.

12.2 The deacons will assign a Social Media Lead to advise on this policy and ensure it is being well implemented. This person will be listed in the church handbook under Roles and Responsibilities, available from the Church Office. They will also welcome comments about how we can improve this policy and keep it current. Their role is not to police the church but to work with and support all those using social media to further the mission of the church

Approved by: Church Members

Date adopted: April 2026, updates approved 23rd July 2026 (Church meeting)

Date of next review: July 2028

APPENDIX A: Users currently approved on social media platforms

Update: April 2026 (incomplete)

Platform	Group	Assigned owner	Who else monitors / can post?	Public or restricted?
Website	General church life	Mike Dray	Kevin Johnson Ana Olteanu David Ho	Public
Youtube	General church life	Mike Dray	Kevin Johnson	Public
WhatsApp				
Facebook	General church life	Sarah Poole	David Ho	Public
	Baby Basics	Alice Molloy	Ana Olteanu	Public
	Deeper	Kevin Johnson		Public
Messenger	General church life	Sarah Poole	David Ho	Restricted
	Baby Basics	Alice Molloy	Ana Olteanu	Restricted
	Deeper	Kevin Johnson		Restricted
Instagram	Youth Work Development	Sarah Poole	Martyn Colliver	Public

APPENDIX B: Social Media Content Complaint Form

1. Your Details

Full Name:

Email Address:

Phone Number (optional):

Preferred Method of Contact: Email / Phone

Are you submitting this complaint on your own behalf or on behalf of another person?

- a. Myself
 - b. Another person (please specify your relationship)
-

2. Details of the Concerning Content

- **Platform where the content appears** (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, X/Twitter, YouTube) _____
- **Link to the content (URL):**
- **Date you first saw the content:** ____/____/____
- **Username/Account that posted the content:**
- **Have you reported this content to the platform directly?** Yes / No
If yes, please provide details:

3. Nature of the Complaint

Please tick all that apply:

- **Hate speech or discrimination** (including anti-religious content)
- **Harassment, bullying, or targeted abuse**
- **Misinformation or false statements about the charity**
- **Misuse of the charity's name, logo, or materials**
- **Privacy concerns** (e.g., sharing personal data without consent)
- **Defamation**

- **Incitement to violence or harm**
- **Content offensive to our faith community**
- **Other** (please describe):

4. Description of the Issue

Please provide as much detail as possible about the content and why you believe it is inappropriate or harmful. *(You may attach screenshots if helpful.)*

5. Impact

How has this content affected you, others, or the charity? (E.g., emotional distress, reputational harm, safety concerns, community impact)

6. Desired Outcome

What action would you like the Church to take?

- Review and assess the content
- Contact the platform to request removal
- Contact the individual who posted it
- Provide safeguarding support
- Provide guidance or mediation
- Other (please specify):

7. Declaration

I confirm that the information provided is accurate to the best of my knowledge.

Signature _____

(typed name is acceptable when the form is submitted electronically)

Date: ____/____/____