

The use of digital communication, including social media, enables the Parochial Church Council (hereafter PCC) of Holy Trinity Northwood to interact in a way, which improves the communication both within the church and with the wider community. This Policy concerns the use of digital communication by the PCC as a body. Appendix A provides more details about specific uses and Appendix B contains Personal Social Media Guidelines, which apply to all members of the PCC and employees of the PCC as they represent Holy Trinity Northwood in the public environment.

The PCC maintains a website and some social media accounts. It uses email to communicate with the congregation of Holy Trinity and with external agencies. Occasionally members may use SMS text messaging and other messaging services. Additionally, the PCC uses an electronic system to manage internal communications with members en masse. The PCC will always try to use the most effective channel for its communications. Over time, the PCC may alter or augment the channels of communication it uses as it seeks to improve and expand the services it delivers. When these changes occur, this Policy may be updated with the aim of reflecting the new arrangements.

Communications from the PCC will:

- be in conformity with all appropriate legislation;
- be in conformity with Church of England requirements;
- not contain material which is knowingly unlawful, libellous, harassing, defamatory, abusive, threatening, harmful, obscene, profane, sexually oriented or racially offensive;
- not contain content knowingly copied from elsewhere, for which we do not own the copyright (if still under copyright) as far as is possible;
- not contain any personal information, other than necessary basic contact details, without a sound legal basis;
- will be moderated by the Vicar, Churchwardens, Office Administrator, or Treasurer where appropriate;
- not be used for the dissemination of any political party advertising.

The PCC's response to any communications received deemed to be 'spamming' or 'trolling' will be to either ignore or send a brief response as appropriate and notify the Safeguarding Officer if necessary. Where necessary the PCC will report communication of the above nature to the police or other relevant authorities.

Internal communication and access to information within the PCC

- The PCC will, from time to time, review the way it communicates to investigate if current processes can be improved. The use of social media and electronic communications are currently a major factor in delivering such improvement.

With regard to the use of social media by ministry teams:

- Ministry team members are encouraged to cultivate an online presence where it supports the aims and vision of the ministry concerned;
- All use of social or digital media by a ministry should conform with the principles set out above and in Appendices A & B ;
- Any social media page associated with a specific ministry (e.g. a homegroup) should be "owned" and administered by the ministry leaders;
- Any social media group associated with a specific ministry or sub-ministry (e.g. a Home Group) should include the relevant ministry leader.

Appendix A – Digital Communications

Website

- The Website (www.htnorthwood.co.uk) is “hosted” by ChurchDesk (with data servers in the European Union) using the subdomain: holytrinity-northwood.churchdesk.com
- The Website is managed by the Webmaster(s) with content provided by other approved users;
- Access has been granted to the vicar, office administrator and wardens who are responsible for updating the newsletter, talks, news and events on a weekly basis and as required;
- All public engagement with the website is monitored by the Webmaster(s)
- Subscription to ChurchDesk is paid on an recurring basis by the PCC.

Email

- All members of the PCC, employees of the PCC and senior volunteer leaders have an @htnorthwood.co.uk email address to be used to access PCC documents or carry out any formal communication with external organisations or individuals on behalf of the church;
- The email system we use is business-class Office365 supplied by Microsoft which also allows users to access, edit and share documents as appropriate. The Office365 Administrator manages user access and security levels.
- All email communication from external sources to church staff is to be responded to at the earliest possibility within their standard working hours;
- The Office Administrator is usually responsible for dealing with general email communication received and forwarding on messages to others for action;
- All official communications on behalf of the PCC must come from the PCC Secretary, Churchwardens, Office Administrator, Vicar or Treasurer (unless the PCC has authorised a responsible person to do so).

ChurchDesk

- This system manages the contacts database and also the internal and external facing electronic diaries as well as newsletters, rotas and the website.
- It allows for the creation and submission of electronic forms as well as for online payments and donations. • ChurchDesk Administrators manage access and security levels.

X (formerly Twitter) Account • The X Account is managed by the vicar and the HT Tweeter;

- The PCC authorises the above to tweet, reply, like and retweet, direct message, follow and unfollow, block and report at their discretion to ensure the mission and ministry of the church is promoted.

Facebook Page

- The Facebook Page is managed by Facebook Manager(s); it is automatically updated by feeds from our website and twitter account.
- The primary function of the Facebook Page is for the PCC to communicate beyond the congregation.
- Anyone can ‘like’ the Church’s Facebook Page and they will then receive information on their Timeline when anything is posted to that page;
- Comments within a thread appear without authorisation, these are however monitored by the administrator as far as is possible;
- Reviews and messages to the page are also monitored by Admins.

WhatsApp Youth Group

- This Group is a private group to communicate to members of the Youth. The Administrators are the Vicar and the Youth Minister and access is controlled.
- Admin reserves the right to hide or delete any post which is deemed to be unlawful, libellous, harassing, defamatory, abusive, threatening, harmful, obscene, profane, sexually oriented or racially offensive; • Admin reserves the right to remove any member posting content deemed to be unacceptable under the above conditions;
- Members of the Group can remove themselves from the group at any time, although their posts will remain. • A parent or guardian responsible for under 16s should consent to a young person becoming a member of this group.

Photographs

- Any individual or small group photographs featuring children's faces used in promotional material (including but not restricted to the website, social media and magazine) may only be used under the consent of a parent or guardian;
- Registration forms for all children's and youth activities will include a clause where parents or guardian give their consent for photographs to be taken of the child and for the use of said images in any promotional material unless they opt out;
- Consent for the use of images of children does not need to be sought for crowd shots such as those taken of a congregation during a service;
- All photographs owned by the church are stored in the user-restricted part of ChurchDesk and likewise in Office365.
- Individuals under 18 will never be identified in any public post without explicit additional permission for a parent/guardian.

Getting the Most Out of Your Personal Space on the Web

It's exciting to see so many members of the Holy Trinity community online! Blogs, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, etc. are an incredible way to share your faith journey, get to know other ministry leaders, learn, chronicle your life, and generally connect with people you wouldn't otherwise. As we work together to lead people to become fully devoted followers of Christ, here are a few tips to keep in mind while we navigate the ins and outs of the online world:

- **Is the digital you a Christian?** When people go online, they can feel like a different person. It can even feel like a getaway, or a place to relax from real-world stress. But it's not. Ask yourself this: could people tell by your social media accounts that you are a follower of Christ? Do the things you say match the love you should be sharing? Take a moment from time to time to scroll through your accounts, and see if the digital you is confidently reflecting your relationship with Christ.
- **You're not always amongst friends.** As much as your blog, Twitter stream, Facebook page, Instagram feed, etc. might feel like your home on the internet surrounded by your friends it's really a public space. Make sure you are confident that you are happy for all of your online content to be seen by anybody.
- **Spread news, don't break it.** We'd love it if you share the great things God is doing at Holy Trinity online. But make sure what you talk about is ready for public consumption. If we've talked about it in a service or posted it on the website or on an official social media account, the information is ready for public consumption. We'll try and make this news easy to share!
- **Be safeguarding savvy.** Holy Trinity is blessed with lots of different people including many children. It is always wise to ask the permission of a parent or guardian before friending or following a member of the church who is under 18 – even if they add/friend/follow you first! If you have any concerns about any behaviour you observe you should report it immediately to the Vicar or Safeguarding Officer as soon as possible.
- **Neither detract or distract.** It may sound obvious but always avoid posting things which directly contradict the views and beliefs of the Church, but you'll also want to be on the lookout for things that will distract from the mission of the church. You might post about something which is entirely in line with our beliefs which can still draw unwanted attention to the church, and that can take substantial time to manage and explain. • **Ask questions.** If you want to spur conversation about a topic, think about open-ended posts and questions, not opinions.
- **You are not an island.** Yes, a disclaimer is a good idea. But even with that, what you say in your tweets, on your blog, and on your Facebook page is just as much of a reflection of the church as what you do in your personal life.
- **Think before you share.** Before you post something that someone else wrote, make sure it's from a source you and the church can stand by. Make sure to watch the whole video or read the whole article. A share without context is usually considered an endorsement, so be mindful to provide some background behind why you thought the post was worth a share.
- **Don't be gullible!** Check sources before sharing, often content can be hoaxes, out of date or just wrong. If in doubt check with a responsible friend.
- **When in doubt, be positive.** Whether you're responding to a snarky comment, frustrated with customer service, feeling like making a political statement, or trying to decide if you should write about something that's bothering you, you'll never regret taking the high road (and sometimes that means not saying anything at all). Remember, **people need your love far more than they need your opinion.** Your presence on the web is an extension of your personal ministry.