

IOM Methodist District – Digital Media

Policy

This document sets out standards and procedures relating to the use of online and social media within the context of The Methodist Church in the Isle of Man. It is important to note, that although this policy references specific social media platforms, the general principles should in all cases be applied to any current or future means of online communication.

The Methodist Church encourages the use of social media tools as a means of extending our engagement with people inside and outside the 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.

Safety – applicable to ALL digital media

It is important that the safety of children, young-people and vulnerable adults especially, must be maintained.

Conversation on social media can sometimes develop into heated and pointless argument. Be aware of the effect on yourself, and don't feel you always need to engage.

Do not post or share content that is sexually explicit, inflammatory, hateful, abusive, threatening or otherwise disrespectful. Try to think of the effect on others who may see what you post.

Be transparent. Don't mislead people about who you are or use pseudonyms.

Be careful when sharing content. Don't share in haste. Read linked content thoroughly or watch a video to the end so you know exactly what you are sharing before you judge whether it is suitable to share.

Maintain confidentiality. If telling a story about someone else, ask yourself first ‘Is this my story to tell?’

Don't reveal personal details about others without their explicit permission.

Local churches are encouraged to have online presence - any website should form part of IOM Methodist District site and NOT be a stand-alone URL. It is recommended that Facebook is used for a dynamic online presence and an individual, who understands the platform and standards described above, should be the Administrator. The local Church Council is responsible for the content & appointing the Administrator.

Do not share still or moving images of people, whether they are of children or adults, without their express written consent. Consider that others may not wish for their whereabouts or religious beliefs to be made public.

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Good practice:

- Maintain a current list of local Church Community and current email addresses.
- When distributing messages to a group via email always use the “bcc” option to prevent copying of email addresses for other purposes.
- Check periodically that recipients wish to continue to “subscribe” [recommended annually as a minimum]
- Personal contact details, (e.g., phone numbers, email addresses) should NOT be published online

Zoom & similar video conferencing software.

Zoom is a “closed” meeting with participants sent details directly by email. Zoom coordinates should not be shared on social media or any website. When advertising your service or event, ask people to request the joining link, providing an email address.

It is an obligation of the host to manage participants & to use the product features responsibly whilst maintaining standards described in this document.

Use the Zoom “Waiting Room” both before & during the meeting to manage & control participants.

Make sure that all names on attendees’ online profiles display their full names and are written correctly. The host can assist those who are unsure how to edit their participant name.

Participants should be prudent as to what is discussed & with whom in any online chat; the conversation is heard by all: confidentiality needs to be preserved.

Live streaming services & events

Facebook & other platforms offer the ability for broadcast of events without limitation/restriction as to who attends; additional levels of caution & warnings need to be applied to such events. Any presenter / preacher needs to agree to such a “live” online event; a warning needs to be displayed if there is a possibility of attendees appearing and being recognised on screen.

YouTube The Isle of Man Staff Team have access to upload videos onto the Isle of Man Methodist YouTube channel. These are public videos which can be viewed by anyone online. General principles outlined above must be adhered to with regard to content, GDPR, and permissions being given before video is uploaded.

The YouTube channel should have restrictions applied so that public comments on each video are held for moderation and only displayed once approved by a member of the Staff Team.

Churches who wish to create videos are encouraged to use the existing Isle of Man Methodist YouTube Channel rather than create a separate channel, and pass videos for uploading to a member of the Staff Team.

Websites

Websites are widely visible and must therefore create a positive impression on the public. The use of “church jargon” will reduce understanding & detract from a positive perception. Each church has a page on the District Website www.methodist.org.im. This should contain up to date but static information about the church; it is recommended to review the content relating to their “chapel” at least quarterly & outdated material removed.

If a church wishes to create a separate website, with unique URL, they must discuss this first with the IOM staff team.

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Facebook & similar

Churches who wish to maintain a presence on Facebook are encouraged to set up a Facebook page for the broadcasting of events and publicity and a Facebook group for discussion within the church family. Both Pages and Groups can have more than one Administrator, these should be appointments made by the relevant body (e.g. Church Council/Circuit Meeting etc)

Facebook Page

A Facebook Page can be viewed by anyone online and will appear in online search engines (e.g. Google). The settings for the page should allow only the appointed administrator/s to post on them. The church community should be made aware of how to contact the administrator to request information is uploaded to the Page.

The administrator of a Facebook Page can also interact with other pages and posts on Facebook on behalf of that page - e.g. the administrator of the Isle of Man Methodist Church page can make a comment anywhere on Facebook as “Isle of Man Methodist Church”.

Personal contact details, (e.g., phone numbers, email addresses), in publicity material should only be included when absolutely necessary. It is important to remember that online posts by a Facebook Page can be seen by anyone anywhere in the world, and in perpetuity, unless they are removed when out of date.

Facebook pages should be regularly reviewed, and outdated posts/material, (e.g., posters and publicity for events), should be removed.

This is a good platform for broadcasting news and events but is not the place for comments and discussion. Posts made by a Facebook Page can be automatically linked to a group which is the forum in which discussions can take place (see below)

Facebook Groups

These are best suited for discussion within the church family, as anyone in the group can post and comment. They can be a powerful tool for discipleship, however not a substitute for face-to-face pastoral care. The Group should be “closed” with applications for membership of the group approved by the administrator/s.

Administrators should restrict membership of the group to people who are known and trusted by the church community. For safeguarding reasons, the staff team must be allowed access to the group if requested.

A 'prohibited list' will be maintained by the District Office. Facebook Group administrators should check with the District Office before admitting unknown people to their groups and should report any inappropriate online posts to the District Office.