

# Otter Vale Mission Community

## Social Media and Communications policy

### Introduction

Online communications include websites and all social media channels, as they are web-based tools and applications, which enable users to create and share content (words, images and video content), as well as network with each other through the sharing of information, opinions, knowledge and common interests. Examples of social media include Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram.

People communicate using various forms and this is an important part of our 'world'; therefore, it is essential for our ministry that we engage with it. By setting good practice guidelines and boundaries, we aim to protect our people and help them stay safe online. Responsible engagement with people through social media can be an effective part of our ministry. It can also be an opportunity to help educate people to engage with social media and other forms of communication safely.

The Parochial Church Councils (PCCs) of the Otter Vale Mission Community (OVMC) request the following of those posting material in the name of any of our churches:

- Be governed by how you would normally speak and act; the same principles that guide your offline conversations should inform your conversations online. You should always aim to be respectful and courteous to those you engage with online.
- Don't operate under aliases or a new identity.
- Always assume that anything you post online is permanent. Even if you delete it shortly afterwards, it may have been copied and published elsewhere. Always think carefully before posting and never make comments about someone online that you wouldn't also say in public.
- Ensure the quality and content of images and language should be of a standard that will not cause offence and not in breach of copyright.
- Do not automatically assume that third party material is accurate: seek verification, for example by checking data/statistics and be wary of photo manipulation.
- Remember that if you are an office holder in the church, you will be seen as a representative of your church, the Diocese and the Church of England. Putting in a proviso that the views you are expressing are personal or your own will not stop the media picking them up and repeating them. If in doubt, take advice, but always remember you are responsible for your online presence.
- Remember that the law and the church's safeguarding policy apply in your communications with children, young people and adults. You should not exchange private messages with people via social media.

### Legal considerations

The law regards anything posted online as being published and in the public domain and subject to legislation around libel, defamation, copyright and data protection.

**Reviewed: 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2023 by the clergy and Churchwardens of the OVMC**