

Churches Together in Devon

Digital and Social Media Policy

March 2020

Issued by the Enabling Group of Churches Together in Devon

1. Introduction and Purpose

Churches Together in Devon helps churches in their united mission and service among the people who live and work in Devon.

Churches Together in Devon is the sponsoring body of 19 Local Ecumenical Partnerships (LEPs) including 4 Local Covenants, and supports 30 local ecumenical groups.

Churches Together in Devon has ten key areas of work:

- (1) to be a visible sign of the Churches' commitment to one another and to assist the churches in the visible expression of Christian unity;
- (2) to affirm, support and service local ecumenism, and encourage local Churches Together groups;
- (3) to act as Sponsoring Body for present and future Local Ecumenical Partnerships,
- (4) to encourage shared worship and prayer, learning, service and evangelism, with each church sharing with others the treasures of its tradition;
- (5) to encourage full ecumenical consultation so that churches may use resources in the interests of good stewardship;
- (6) to provide a meeting point for church leaders and representatives within the ecumenical area;
- (7) to keep the churches informed about ecumenical initiatives within Devon and beyond, in particular those promoted by Churches Together in England and Churches Together in Britain and Ireland;
- (8) to support the churches in their response to the needs and opportunities of society, to assist them in their relations with local government, and other statutory, voluntary and private bodies, and, to make representations on behalf of the churches,
- (9) to encourage the fostering of good relations with other faith communities;
- (10) to encourage those bodies and individuals in the churches which share a similar concern to work together in mission and evangelism.

Churches Together in Devon encourages reasonable and appropriate use of digital and social media where this is a relevant part of work and mission. However, whether personal or professional, users must be aware that they are still seen to be representing Churches Together in Devon.

For the purposes of this policy, digital and social media is any type of interactive online media that allows parties to communicate with each other or to share information in a public forum. This includes, but is not limited to, websites, online social forums such as Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn. This also covers blogs, whatsapp and video and image sharing websites such as YouTube, Vimeo and Flickr.

There are many more examples of digital and social media than can be listed here as this is a constantly changing area. This policy should be followed in relation to any digital and social media that is used now or in the future.

2. Scope

This policy covers behaviours by Trustees (i.e. Enabling Group) and members of Facebook and Churches Together Groups.

3. Policy

- 3.1. Churches Together in Devon recognises that many people make positive use of social media for work and mission purposes and in a personal capacity as well. However, whether acting on behalf of Churches Together in Devon or in a personal capacity, users must be aware that they can damage Churches Together in Devon's reputation.

- 3.2. The Enabling Group looks after the protection and enhancement of the reputation of Churches Together in Devon. As such it is essential that:
- digital and social media communications referencing Churches Together in Devon have a purpose and are of benefit to Churches Together in Devon.
- 3.3. digital and social media communications are within the denominational guidelines of Churches represented by Churches Together in Devon and adhere to this policy.
- 3.4. Any communications made through digital and social media should not:
- bring Churches Together in Devon into disrepute
 - damage the reputation of Churches Together in Devon
 - breach confidentiality
 - breach copyright
 - do anything that could be considered discriminatory against, or bullying or harassment of, any individual or group
 - contain content or images that are discriminatory or offensive (or links to such content)
 - be abusive or threatening or sexual or inappropriate in nature (or links to such content)

There is a Privacy Policy under Terms and Conditions for use on the website accessible on the Churches Together in Devon webpage.

- 3.5. Breaches of this policy may lead to disciplinary action.

4. Monitoring and Review

The effectiveness of this Policy will be reviewed every two years or when necessary by the Enabling Group

5. Responsibility

Oversight for digital and social media communications and reputation management lies within the Enabling Group.

6. Code of Conduct for Facebook- also available on Facebook page

Part of the code of conduct below is attributable to the Church of England's social community guidelines and their digital charter, which has been adapted for the use of Churches Together in Devon.

What we say

Keep on topic – if you wish to comment on a thread, stay with the subject. If you wish to introduce a new subject, start a new separate post.

Keep within the core subjects of Churches Together in Devon. i.e. any post needs to be inclusive of all of the following

- **Churches** – It needs to be some kind of link to Churches, Christian faith or a subject of concern to Christians.
- **Together** - It needs to be linked with ecumenism in some way. Not all comments or events advertised will be directly ecumenical in nature, but they do need to be open to anyone.
- **Devon** - It needs to have some link with Devon even if only to inform Churches and Christians in Devon of wider issues or events.

Posts about activities or issues that are not specifically Christian in nature are permissible if they are of help to the Churches Together in Devon Facebook group members, and particularly support or inform the mission of the church generally and particularly in Devon.

No routine advertising - Do not use this page as a convenient place to regularly advertise your own churches normal events e.g. weekly services. Occasional reminders are acceptable but if these become too frequent, they will be deleted. The page administrators will decide what is deemed "too frequent". However, notices about special or seasonal and festival events will be welcome. Please no spamming.

Do not post weekly service or notice sheets. They are counterproductive and clog up the site.

How we say it

Take responsibility. You are accountable for the things you do, say and write. Text and images shared can be public and permanent, even with privacy settings in place. Please show respect for all on here. Stay positive and generate good conversations. If you're not sure, don't post it.

Be kind. Treat others how you would wish to be treated and assume the best in people. If you have a criticism or critique to make, consider not just *whether* you would say it in person, but the tone you would use. If you wouldn't say it face to face, don't say it here.

Disagree well. Some conversations can be places of robust disagreement and it's important we apply our values in the way we express them. No personal attacks (hostile, derogatory or deliberately insulting comments toward a specific individual, church, denomination or group)

Be a good ambassador. Personal and professional life can easily become blurred online so think before you post.

Be respectful. Do not post or share content that is sexually explicit, inflammatory, hateful, abusive, threatening or otherwise disrespectful. Do not bully, intimidate, or use hate speech or offensive language.

Be honest. Don't mislead people about who you are. No trolling (posting comments intended to induce an angry response).

Be safe. The safety of children, young people and vulnerable adults must be maintained. Never form private relationships with children you are not related to. If you have any concerns, ask a safeguarding adviser from your own church or denomination.

Credit others. Acknowledge the work of others. Respect copyright and always credit where it is due. Be careful not to release sensitive or confidential information and always question the source of any content you are considering amplifying. If necessary, check with the author before posting.

Follow the rules. Abide by the terms and conditions of the various social media platforms themselves. If you see a comment that you believe breaks their policies, then please report it to the respective company.

Finally - Please do not make allegations or raise grievances about churches, ministers or other church members here. Such posts will be immediately deleted. Such things will be taken seriously by your own church so please talk to the page administrator. If any portion of a comment or post is inappropriate, the entire thread may be deleted.

The Facebook Page will be administered by the County Ecumenical Officer and properly appointed nominated persons. Their decision to remove inappropriate posts or comments will be final.

Posts expressed by individuals in the Churches Together in Devon Facebook group do not necessarily reflect the views of Churches Together in Devon.