

Paper C3

Social media guidelines

Communications Committee

Basic information

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| Contact name and email address | The Revd Peter Stevenson (Convenor) revdpete@btinternet.com Andy Jackson (Head of Communications) andy.jackson@urc.org.uk |
| Action required | To note. |
| Draft resolution(s) | Mission Council commends the new Digital Charter and revised Social Media Guidelines to all that engage with the Church digitally. |

Summary of content

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| Subject and aim(s) | To update the URC's social media guidelines. |
| Main points | Updating the guidelines that have been published in the past to ensure respectful engagement by all who use social media in the URC. |
| Previous relevant documents | Paper C2, November 2014 meeting; Paper C1, March 2021 meeting; Paper C3, March 2021 meeting. |
| Consultation has taken place with... | The Communications Committee. |

Summary of impact

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| Financial | |
| External (e.g. ecumenical) | |

Our guidelines for social media have been updated to provide encouragement and guidance for the appropriate use of social media.

Its aim is to encourage online conversations that reflect the values of the United Reformed Church (URC) and apply to all content posted on the national social media accounts run by the Church, and those that use the URC name, logo and brand.

When used well, social media is an effective tool in communicating the Gospel, our work as Christians, and the life of the URC. It's interactive, immediate and offers the opportunity for forming and deepening relationships locally and globally.

The URC has national social media accounts on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [YouTube](#).

These guidelines are written specifically for all who engage using the social media channels managed by the URC Communications Team, those run by its synods – Northern, North Western, Mersey, Yorkshire, East Midlands, West Midlands, Eastern, South Western, Wessex, Thames North, Southern, the National Synod of Wales and the National Synod of Scotland, and those managed by our local congregations.

By engaging with URC national social media accounts, you agree to:

- **Be safe.** The safety of children, young people and vulnerable adults must be maintained. The URC has an [online safety policy](#). If you have any concerns, ask your local safeguarding coordinator, or your Synod safeguarding officer.
- **Be respectful.** Never make any comments, create or share posts, that are sexually explicit or could be considered racist, sexist or homophobic.
- **Be kind.** As said in Matthew 7:12, treat people how you would wish to be treated. If making a criticism or critique, consider your words, tone, and how you would speak in person. If receiving criticism or critique, make a judgement call between an expressed view and an abusive comment.
- **Be honest.** Be credible, fair and honest.
- **Take responsibility.** You are accountable for the things you say, do and write. If you're not sure, don't post it.
- **Be a good ambassador.** Personal and professional life can easily become blurred online. You are a representative of the URC, and for Christ. Think before you post. If managing an account that includes the URC name or logo, eg a church, think about appointing at least two people to monitor and manage your social media account.
- **Credit others.** Acknowledge the work of others by giving credit where it is due. Many things, like pictures, are subject to copyright and permission to use needs to be sought. The Christian Copyright Licensing International (CCLI) website is an excellent source of information on copyright law. Take care in what you publish and question the source of any content you are considering posting.
- **Follow the rules.** Social media platforms have their own terms and conditions. Abide by them and report anything you believe breaks the policies of the respective company by using the method it has outlined.

How will we respond to people who breach our social media community guidelines?

The URC Communications Team, which manages the national social media accounts, may take action towards any post deemed unsuitable, offensive or inflammatory. This may include deleting comments, blocking users or reporting comments as inappropriate.

Who do I speak to for further advice?

If you have a safeguarding concern, please follow these [policies and procedures](#), or use these [contacts](#).

The URC Communications Team can be contacted [here](#).