

# Kirkcaldy Congregational Church

## *Online Safety & Social media*

# 1. Online safety

## Introduction

Technology is constantly advancing, bringing with it additional safeguarding considerations. An online safety policy is necessary to safeguard all electronic communications between the church and children/young people (those under 18 years of age) recognising the merging between online and offline worlds and the distinctiveness and difficulties within faith based organisations of defining clear boundaries for everyone.

This online safety policy sets out the roles, responsibilities and procedures for the acceptable, safe and responsible use of online technologies for adults and children within this church, including the use of mobile phones, computers and other electronic devices.

It explains what will happen in the event of unacceptable use of these technologies and details the support that will be provided to support children, parents and others in the safe and responsible use of these technologies beyond the church.

## Why we have a policy

The use of the Internet and mobile devices has become an integral part of church and home life. There are always going to be risks to using any form of communication which lies within the public domain. It is therefore imperative that there are clear rules, procedures and guidelines to minimise these risks and especially when children use these technologies.

It is also important that workers and church members are clear about appropriate procedures so that they are safeguarded from misunderstandings or allegations through a lack of knowledge of potential risks.

This church acknowledges that whilst we will endeavour to safeguard against all risks we may not be able to completely eliminate them. Any incidents that may arise will be dealt with quickly and according to policy to ensure that children are best protected

## Policy Aims

- to ensure the safeguarding of children within and beyond church by raising awareness of appropriate and acceptable uses of online technologies
- to outline the roles and responsibilities of everyone involved
- to have clarity about procedures following the misuse of any online technologies
- to work with parents / carers and to maintain a continued awareness of both the benefits and potential issues of online technologies

## Our commitment to online safety

We will equip children with the skills and knowledge that they need to use the technology in this church safely and responsibly, and to manage the possible risks.

We will also ensure that they are aware of where they can go to get help, apart from trusted adults, if they are uncomfortable with anything in the digital world.

## **Use of electronic devices**

When using a computer or electronic device with internet access at this church, individuals must be made aware of what is acceptable usage and will not:

- search for and/or enter pornographic, violent, racist or hate-motivated websites
- download, forward-on, copy or burn onto CD any music, images or movies from the Internet where permission has not been granted by the copyright holders
- disclose any personal information e.g. addresses (postal, email or messenger), telephone numbers, bank details, including personal information about another person
- send or display offensive messages or pictures
- deliberately browse, download, upload or forward material that could be considered offensive or illegal
- use obscene language
- violate copyright laws
- trespass in folders, work or files belonging to others
- retrieve, send, copy or display offensive messages or pictures
- harass, insult, bully or attack others
- damage computers, computer systems or computer networks
- use another user's password
- use computers for unapproved commercial purposes

## **Use of images generated during church activities**

Clear guidelines will be operated as follows:

- permission will be sought from parents / carers before any images are taken and/or displayed. Images will only be used for the specific purpose agreed by the person photographed
- written consent will specify what purposes the image will be used for, and how it will be stored. For instance if the intention is to use an image on the church website or other forms of publicity, this will be clearly stated at the time that consent is sought
- further written consent will be sought if images are to be used in ways other than originally specified
- if children object, even if parents / carers have agreed, their wishes will be respected
- photographs that include children will be selected carefully and will not enable individual children to be clearly identified
- children's full names and/or other details will not be used anywhere in association with photographs or other media
- when using photographs of children, group pictures will be used wherever possible

- any use of images will reflect the diversity of age, ethnicity and gender of the activity
- except in exceptional cases, which will be agreed, and known about, digital media relating to children will be stored on church computers. Should this not be possible for any reason, where the media is to be stored will be recorded

### **We will respond appropriately and sensitively to all online safety concerns.**

In the event of concern that there may be an online safety incident, this will be reported to the church's designated safeguarding co-ordinator in the same manner as the reporting of any other safeguarding concern. The safeguarding co-ordinator will then determine if the matter should be reported to the statutory authorities.

### **We will seek consent to use different means of communication**

We will use our personal information consent form to seek clear consent for communication with individuals in various forms, including:

- Post
- Telephone (including mobile)
- Email
- Text and other electronic means

### **We will store data securely**

There are a variety of ways that data can be stored. Where data of any form about children is stored this will be password protected and in general be stored securely on the church premises. If this is not possible then a record will be made of where the data is stored. Where it is necessary for data to be transported, memory sticks will be purchased for workers so that there is a separation between personal and church information.

## **2. Use of Social media**

### **Introduction**

The church will seek to embrace new forms of communication to engage with the wider community. There is recognition that where previous printed communications were easy to control, new forms of media are interactive, conversational and open-ended. It happens in a public, not private, space.

There are some basic principles which guide our approach to social media, and the use of the web-site. We will be:

- credible, accurate, fair, thorough and transparent.
- consistent - encouraging constructive criticism and deliberation.
- cordial, honest and professional at all times

- responsive - sharing insights where appropriate.
- good representatives of the Church, remembering to make it clear when we are speaking personally
- respectful - respecting confidentiality, respecting the views of others even where we disagree.

## In practice

- Never share personal details like home address and phone numbers except with someone you know and trust, and if you decide to do so then use a private message. Be aware an address can be disclosed in many ways for example via photos or a GPS position as well as in written form.
- Always remember that participating online results in comments being permanently available and open to being republished in other media. Once something is posted to a blog or other internet site, it should be assumed to be still available even if it is later deleted from the original site.
- Stay within the legal framework and be aware that safeguarding, libel, slander, copyright and data protection laws apply.
- Respect the privacy of the church.
- Use social media to share good news of church life and congregation members – first checking that the particular person/people involved is/are happy for the news of their engagement/ pregnancy /marriage/ anniversary/ recovery from illness etc. to become public. If you are telling a story about anyone, ask yourself Is this my story to tell?
- Do make sure you have permission to use peoples' images online. With children in particular, ensure that you ask the permission of the child/parent/carer before taking pictures/videos of children and ensure that the parent/carer signs consent forms. It is advisable to use group photographs of children rather than individuals. When captioning photos/videos of children, do not include any personal details about them, including their names.
- Be aware that social media may attract media interest, so proceed with care whether you are participating in an official or a personal capacity.
- Don't respond censoriously to every little remark just because you don't like it! Take a judgement call between someone who is expressing a view that you or the church may not hold and someone who is writing abusive comments.
- Never make any comments that could be considered racist, sexist, or homophobic, or engage in any other conduct that would be considered unacceptable in a Christian environment.
- Never engage with posters who are being deliberately hateful, simply remove the post.

All participation online should be approached in the same way as you would with other public forums, taking responsibility for the things you do, say or write.

## Adoption

Church Secretary:	David Fairgrieve
Signed:	
Date adopted:	18 November 2018
Review due:	November 2019