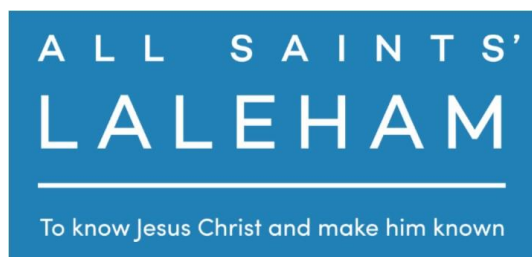


Social Media Policy

January 2024



According to The Parish Safeguarding Handbook¹ (p47, hereafter called the PSH) using social media can include such activities as:

- using sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram & SnapChat
- writing or commenting on a blog
- taking part in discussions on web forums or message boards
- using mobile phones to communicate (e.g. WhatsApp)

It highlights the importance of engaging with church communities through these platforms, especially as younger people use these media more and more, but it also these risks:

- Forming inappropriate relationships
- Saying things you should not, such as offensive, sexual or suggestive comments
- Blurring the boundaries between public work/ministry and your private life
- Groom and impersonation
- Bully and harassment

Named Person

The PSH stipulates that PCCs must approve the use of social media and mobile phones by the church and ensure there is a named person to whom all workers are accountable. This person must be a church officer with knowledge of church account usernames and passwords so that they can proactively monitor social media usage.²

The Named Person for Social Media Accountability at All Saints' Church is The Children's Champion (currently Alexandra Wren).

Social Media Usage

At the time of writing All Saints' has:

- Numerous WhatsApp groups (see Appendix A). Most of these are part of a WhatsApp Community, so as to group them together and allow others to request to join relevant groups.
- An Instagram Profile (<https://www.instagram.com/allsaintslaleham/>)
- A Facebook Page (<https://www.facebook.com/allsaintslaleham>)
- A Parents & Toddlers Facebook Page (<https://www.facebook.com/LalehamToddlers>)

The PCC is happy for further Social Media groups, profiles or pages to be set up at the discretion of the Vicar, as long as they comply with this Policy. This could either be for further Social Networking sites or for specific ministries on existing sites.

¹ <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2019-10/ParishSafeGuardingHandBookAugust2019Web.pdf>

² It is not expected the Named Person would have access to communications (e.g. WhatsApp or Texts) on a Church Officer's personal phone, in the same way they would not have access to their emails.

Safeguarding

Accountability and transparency must be at the heart of our Social Media usage. The PSH (pages 48-50) gives good advice to church officers as to how to stay safe using Social Media.

Within the context of All Saints' Laleham, the following specific guidance is given:

- Any safeguarding concerns that arise on social media should be reported to the Parish Safeguarding Officer as normal.
- There should be clear boundaries between church and private social media usage. E.g. a church employee should not use their own private social media accounts (e.g. Facebook or Instagram) to communicate with young people.
- The exception to the above is WhatsApp where it's not always possible to have two accounts. The PSH recommends that wherever possible, church officers should have a dedicated mobile phone number for work purposes, but where this isn't possible it's acknowledged that church business will sometimes need to be conducted over a personal mobile number.
- Church Officers or Role Holders (such as Sunday School Leaders/Helpers) should **not**:
 - Use a personal Facebook, Instagram or similar accounts in their work with children, young people or vulnerable adults.
 - Add or follow children, young people or vulnerable adults as friends on their personal accounts.
 - 'Stalk' anyone (i.e. dig through people's Facebook pages to find out about them).

Communication with Young People

Since young people (here meaning those in secondary school) primarily use social and digital media to communicate, the PCC do not wish to completely prohibit Youth Leaders from communicating with a young person through such means, but to provide guidelines and boundaries for doing so safely.³

The following rules always apply for communication between a youth leader and a young person:

- All communication should be on a same-sex basis (e.g. a male leader to male members) apart from mass-communication to a whole group.
- All communication is done with the knowledge and consent of the young person's parent/guardian (e.g. a leader would ask a parent if they're ok with them messaging the young person about meeting up).
- To avoid the relationship being misunderstood by an outsider, leaders will not send more than 5 messages (through whatever medium) to one individual in any given week.
- All communication between leaders and young people will happen between 8am and 8pm. Where a message is sent to a leader later than 8pm, the leader will wait until the morning to reply. The only exception to this would be a message about a youth event asking for practical details which might not finish until later or if there were concerns for the young person's safety.
- In all communication, leaders must be above reproach.

³ This section is adapted from the Co-Mission Churches Trust Safeguarding Policy (<https://co-mission.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/CMCT-Safeguarding-policy.pdf>) pages 69-71.

The following table includes more specific detail related to different media:

	SAS Age (School Years 7-9)	WIN Age (School Years 10-13)
Text Messaging / WhatsApp	<p>None</p> <p>Parents are informed in WhatsApp groups about the details of meetings and events.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can use to confirm attendance at event or one to one meetings • Occasional use, such as to send birthday messages or encourage with Bible verses • Not for conversation or discussion of any kind • On WhatsApp, use group messaging where possible, and only with 16+ (as that's WhatsApp's age limit). Normally parents will also be in such WhatsApp groups.
Mobile Phone Calls	<p>None</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used only to confirm expected attendance at an event or a one to one meeting. • E.g. If leaders & members are at a venue waiting for another member's arrival, the leader may call to ask where they are. • A leader's phone number may be given to members on an offsite trip, in case the young person has a problem. • Not used for any other communication or personal/pastoral work.
Landlines	<p>None</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used to confirm attendance at events or arrange meeting for one to ones.
Facebook	<p>None</p> <p>Leaders should not be Facebook friends with members of the youth work. Facebook has an age limit of 13, so shouldn't be used by this age group anyway.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since the youth do not particularly use Facebook, there is not a need to engage with young people on Facebook. • If this were to change, leaders could use a closed Facebook page to communicate about events with the young people.

Instagram	<p>None</p> <p>Leaders should not follow members of the youth work on Instagram.</p> <p>Instagram has an age limit of 13, so shouldn't be used by this age group anyway.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The youth team could decide to set up an Instagram profile to communicate with the young people (as per the Access requirements below). If so all communication, including direct messaging, should be done through the Youth Group profile, and not a personal profile. • Leaders should not follow young people on their own personal accounts, or encourage young people to follow them (they do not need to block them though). • Leader personal accounts should be above reproach and an example to the young people.
Other Social Networking Sites <i>e.g. Twitter, Snapchat, etc.</i>	<p>None</p>	<p>None</p> <p>No other social networking site should be used to communicate with young people. If there is a good case to allow this, the PCC must review it first.</p>
Email	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May be used to confirm a one to one meeting only if parents are cc'd and copies of emails are kept. • Parents are informed in emails about details of meetings and events. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May be used to confirm details of and attendance at events. Copies of emails must be kept. • Only for administrative purposes only (i.e. not pastoral purposes). • Group emails will also be sent to parents (separately from the email sent to young people).
Chat Rooms & Online Gaming	<p>None</p>	<p>None</p>

Access

The key to our Social Media usage is openness and transparency. The **Named Person** should have a means of accessing WhatsApp groups and Social Media sites used for church business.

The following specific guidelines apply:

WhatsApp	<p>The default is that WhatsApp Groups relating to the church should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• be part of the All Saints' Laleham WhatsApp 'Community', so that the PCC and Named Person are aware of their existence.• should include the ASL WhatsApp Account as an Admin. This means that the Named Person could use the Office Tablet to read any content. <p>There may be some groups that are an exception to this, at the discretion of the vicar. For instance, Homegroup WhatsApp groups and the Pastoral Care Team group can remain private and separate. Groups that involve cooperation with another church (such as WIN) can also remain separate, but should include the ASL Admin account.</p> <p>For clarity, unless an exception is given by the vicar, all groups should include the ASL Admin account.</p> <p>Group administrators should endeavour to encourage participants in the group to only communicate information relevant to the purpose of the group.</p>
Facebook & Instagram	<p>The Church Facebook and Instagram pages are both linked to a Meta Business Suite account for All Saints' Laleham. In addition, the Facebook pages (Church and Parents & Toddlers) have their own assigned admins. This policy will not go into the technical details, but specify who may have access to Facebook or Instagram Accounts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Church Staff (e.g. administrators or ministers)• Ministry specific team leaders (e.g. a Toddler team member)• The Named Person for Social Media Accountability <p><i>It is assumed that anyone with access has full administrative access.</i></p> <p>Facebook requires individuals to access Pages via their own user account. They switch from their personal profile to the church's profile to make posts.</p> <p>Instagram works differently and access is via a single username and password held by the office.</p> <p>Canva is a tool which connects to both Facebook and Instagram and can be used to design and schedule posts to both. As a church we receive a free team account where each user creates their own posts but can schedule them to the church social media accounts. Canva, or other such tools, can be used to streamline our use of Social Media.</p>

Content

Those who are posting are trusted to adopt a suitable tone and voice for posts. On the whole, given the media being used, the tone will be **informal** and **light-hearted**, but it is expected that at times a more formal and serious tone will be appropriate. Posts can include pictures (if of a person, recent permission, normally recorded on ChurchSuite, will be needed from them or a parent/guardian if under 18) and emojis.

Unless at the explicit direction of the vicar, Social Media should not be used to comment on matters of controversy, politics, or theological issues which could be divisive to our church. That does not stop us expressing distress or otherwise at matters of national or global significance.

Things that could be posted on Social Media might include:

- Scripture verse pictures
- Quotes from pastors or theologians
- Sermons
- Clips from sermons – e.g. a picture with a quote
- Volunteer stories / testimonies
- Articles
- Book recommendations
- Prayer requests
- Upcoming church events
- Good church family news
- Fun facts

Those posting should be mindful of Copyright and credit others where appropriate.

Appendix A: WhatsApp Groups

While it is acknowledged that groups will come and go naturally and not always within the control of the PCC, here is a list of currently known WhatsApp groups related to All Saints' Church (as of 8th Jan 2024):

- ASL AV Team
- All Saints' Men
- Meals for the All Saints' Family
- Freebies & Giveaways
- Set Up Team ASL
- Whitegates Services Team
- Tiny Saints Leaders
- Super Saints Leaders
- Super Saints Parents
- SAS Leaders
- SAS Parents
- HomeWIN
- WIN Leaders*
- WIN 2023-2024*
- Prayers at ASL*
- ASL Staff*

- Parents & Toddlers*
- Numerous Homegroup groups*
- Pastoral Care Team group*

* These groups are not part of the WhatsApp ASL 'Community'.

If anyone knows of other groups not on this list, they should inform someone on the staff team or PCC.