**Introduction – for consideration by Select Vestries**

1. Objectives

It’s important to consider or review why the parish should be using social media, and best to summarise this in two or three objectives. For example, it may be to increase the audience for activities taking place in (or organised by) the parish, to communicate with its online friends and followers, and/or to help to monitor how the parish is mentioned online.

1. Operating an account

The next section of the policy should state:

* **Who runs the social media platform(s):** Social media posts should be cleared by an administrator or group of administrators, who have been appointed by the Select Vestry. Administrators should have, or seek, some knowledge of how to use social media.
* **How to respond to comments:** As is this case for any organisation, a parish is not obliged to respond to all comments posted on or received through its platforms. It is recommended that the administrator(s) will:

	+ Take time to consider comments before responding;
	+ Seek to respond positively to comments if a response is required;
	+ Exercise caution regarding unexpected or poorly worded comments or messages;
	+ Respond to negative comments with a direct message to the author (i.e. to seek to ‘take the conversation offline’ and avoid an open dispute);
	+ Consider, with the advice of the incumbent and/or Select Vestry, a public response on the social media platform if this is needed to maintain or protect the reputation of the parish, or to address a topic or theme with multiple comments;
	+ Respond promptly if people request that their information should be edited or removed from the platform.
* **When social media will be monitored:**  Set aside a time for monitoring social media content – e.g. in normal office hours or over a similar timeframe – and avoid responding outside those times, unless this is urgently required.
1. Guidelines on social media use

All those involved in drawing up a social media policy or administering social media are encouraged to follow the Church’s **social media and digital communications guidelines**. In summary, the guidelines recommend that members of the Church:

* Follow good practice in safeguarding
* Exercise responsibility and courtesy
* Remember that they are representatives of the Church
* Consider all social media posts to be public and permanent
* Remember that normal rules of how to treat others and run organisations well apply online
* Tell people who they are when posting or commenting online
* Ask for advice if in doubt

The guidelines are available, along with other resources, on the Church of Ireland’s website at [www.ireland.anglican.org/socialmedia](http://www.ireland.anglican.org/socialmedia)

If you have any queries, please contact the Church of Ireland Press Office on (028/048) 9082 8880 or by email at press@ireland.anglican.org

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| Social media policy for the Parish of |  |
| Objectives for using social media by the parish: |
| 1. |
| 2. |
| 3. |
| Name(s) of administrator(s) for social media approved by the Select Vestry: |
| 1. |  |
| 2. |  |
| 3. |  |
| Guidance to administrator(s) for responding to comments on social media: |
| * Seek to respond positively to comments if a response is required;
* Exercise caution regarding unexpected or poorly worded comments or messages;
* Respond to negative comments with a direct message to the author, where appropriate;
* Consider, with the advice of the incumbent and/or Select Vestry, a public response on the social media platform if this is needed to maintain or protect the reputation of the parish, or to address a topic or theme with multiple comments;
* Respond promptly if a person requests that their information should be edited or removed from the platform.
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| Social media will be monitored during (or around) the following times: |
|  |
| Administrator(s) are asked to consider the guidance on social media provided at [www.ireland.anglican.org/socialmedia](http://www.ireland.anglican.org/socialmedia)  |
| Policy approved by Select Vestry on: |  |
| Signed by Chairman |  |
| Signed by Hon. Secretary |  |