



Social Media and WhatsApp Use Policy

Worcester Baptist Church

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Date	Amendments	Author
14/05/26	Review Language revised to focus on positives.	Hannah Celia

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Section 1 – Purpose

The vision of Worcester Baptist Church is to be:

- An inclusive community: A church for people of all ages, cultures and backgrounds, reflecting the fact that Christ’s message is for everyone.
- A worshipping community: A church that delights in God, is devoted to Jesus, attentive to the Bible and faithful in prayer.
- An empowering community: A church where people are empowered by the Holy Spirit to live new lives that reflect credit on Jesus.
- A serving community: A church that makes a difference to our part of the city as we build relationships, engage in loving service, and give generously to the needs of our neighbours.

Social media can offer a creative and helpful way to support all aspects of the vision, and this policy sets out how to use it positively whilst minimising any risks of causing harm. This policy sets out how to use it with confidence and care, so everyone knows where they stand and can engage freely. It covers all forms of social media, internet postings and blogs and should be read alongside our other church policies. Particular care around safeguarding and confidentiality is set out in the Safeguarding and Pastoral Care policies. The spirit of this document is enabling, not restricting. We want social media to work well for WBC, and these guidelines are how we make that happen while protecting our community from harm.

Section 2 – Aims

This policy exists to help us use social media well. Specifically, it aims to:

- Equip staff, deacons and volunteer role holders with clear, practical guidance so they can use social media confidently and responsibly.
- Create a safe and welcoming online presence and protect everyone who engages with the Church’s activities.
- Keep Church information secure, so people can share and engage with confidence.
- Uphold and strengthen the Church’s reputation as a community of grace, love and good faith.

Section 3 – Application

This policy applies to staff, deacons and anyone working on behalf of the church. Anyone with a known public role within the church posts as a representative of the church and can affect the church’s work and reputation by their actions, whether or not the post is

in an official or personal capacity, uses church or personal equipment or is for professional or personal purposes.

Section 4- General Principles

Our overriding biblical principle in all our communications, including via social media, is to use grace and love. As Colossians 4:6 states: *'Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.'*

In practice, this means:

- Know your audience and own your content. Review your privacy settings on each platform and think about how posts will land with different audiences. Treat anything posted online as effectively public regardless of settings, and bear in mind that posts persist once made.
- Lead with kindness. Social media is a place to build people up, and our communications should reflect that. Discriminatory, defamatory, bullying or harassing content has no place here, and the same standard applies online as it does face to face.
- The privacy and feelings of others should be respected; details or pictures of others should never be shared without their prior permission.
- Information which could, directly or indirectly, damage the Church's interests or compromise its reputation should not be shared.
- Confidential information about the church, its staff, members or attenders should not be revealed.
- Social media should not be used in a way that breaches any of our other policies.

Section 5 – Using social media on behalf of the church

Only named staff or deacons are authorised to access WBC accounts to promote and share information about church activities. Individuals should not set up other social media channels on behalf of Worcester Baptist Church or that claim to speak for it. The Baptist Union produces guidance: Use of Social Media for Churches which offers helpful guidelines for staff and deacons in addition to this policy.

All social media content should have a clear purpose and bring value to the audience. It must respect copyright, defamation and data protection laws. Care should be taken with the presentation of content, making sure that there are no misspellings or typographical and grammatical errors, the information shared is accurate and the images are clear and licensed for use.

A code of conduct for social media pages should reflect the content of this policy in setting

out expectations of appropriate behaviour for all users (eg stay on topic, be positive, no offensive language or personal attacks.)

Content about individuals, including images and prayer requests or needs, must not be shared without their express permission. If using interviews, videos or photos that clearly identify a child or young person, staff must ensure they have the explicit written consent of a parent or guardian before using them as outlined in the Safeguarding Policy.

In the course of staff and deacon duties, social media must not be used to debate, challenge, promote or support any political/social/cultural ideology, movement, message or campaign other than matters that are consistent with and advance the church's Christian ethos or mission.

Social media is fast-paced and staff need to monitor output proactively and keep information up to date.

Staff and deacons should not offer personal opinions via the church's social media accounts, either directly by commenting or indirectly by 'liking', 'sharing' or 'reposting'.

Where individuals seek to challenge, question or debate content posted or the activities or beliefs of the church, staff or those working on behalf of the church should not seek to respond publicly on social media platforms but, where a question appears to be genuine, should respond privately via email, by phone or face to face.

If a complaint is made on Worcester Baptist Church's social media channels, advice should be sought from the leadership team about how best to respond.

Section 6 – Social media for groups and ministries

Groups or ministries operating as part of Worcester Baptist Church may have their own social media accounts to communicate with participants and share information about their events. These accounts should make clear their association with Worcester Baptist Church and follow the guidance in this policy. Specific guidance about WhatsApp use is attached in Appendix 1.

Section 7 - Specific guidance for staff and deacons

- Personal email addresses (not church email accounts) should be used for personal social media accounts. Personal accounts should not be used in any way which might be perceived as speaking or acting on the church's behalf and should indicate that all views shared are the staff member's own.

- When using social media for church-based activities, staff and deacons should use their church email address, Information Technology or work mobile. Using specific work devices reduces issues around security or posting accidentally.
- Whether at work or otherwise, staff and deacons should ensure that their profile and any posted content does not harm their ability to act as an ambassador for the church and for Jesus Christ.
- If you are uncertain or concerned about the appropriateness of any statement or posting, discuss it before posting with your Line Manager for staff or with the leadership team for ministers and deacons.
- If you see social media content that disparages or reflects poorly on us, you should inform your Line Manager, or other deacons and the minister.

Section 8 - Breach of the policy

Breach of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

Disciplinary action may be taken regardless of whether the breach is committed during working hours, and regardless of whether Church equipment or facilities are used for the purpose of committing the breach.

Individuals may be required to remove internet and/or social media postings that are deemed to constitute a breach of this policy. Failure to comply with such a request may result in disciplinary action.

Appendix 1 –

Church WhatsApp Use Policy

Purpose

WhatsApp is a genuinely useful part of how we do life together at WBC. It keeps teams connected, helps us pray for one another in real time, coordinates the practical machinery of church life, and creates space for encouragement and community between Sundays. Used well, it is one of the simplest ways we can live out our calling to be a connected, caring church. This guidance is here to help everyone use it well, not to restrict it.

Scope

This policy applies to all church-related WhatsApp groups. This includes ministry teams, leadership groups, volunteer coordination, pastoral care groups, and any other group created for church purposes. Anyone participating in these groups is expected to follow this guidance, regardless of their role.

Principles

All communication should be respectful, appropriate, confidential, and responsible. This means speaking with kindness and patience, keeping messages relevant to the purpose of the group, and being mindful of how words may be received. It also means taking responsibility for what is shared, thinking before posting, and recognising that tone can easily be misunderstood in written messages.

Scripture reminds us of the standard we are called to: **“Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs.” – Ephesians 4:29.** This should shape how we communicate in every message we send. If it is not your news to tell, it should not be shared. Sharing information about others without permission is gossip, even if it feels harmless.

What great WhatsApp use looks like

WhatsApp groups work brilliantly for sharing updates, rotas and information that keeps the team running smoothly. They are a genuinely lovely space for encouragement, prayer requests (with the person’s permission), and the kind of informal check-ins that build real community. Using groups to coordinate events, services and ministry activity is actively encouraged. The goal is communication that feels warm, timely and genuinely useful to everyone in the group.

A few things to avoid

To keep our groups as useful and welcoming as possible, please keep confidential or sensitive personal information out of group chats unless you have clear consent to share it. Treat messages as private to the group; screenshots, copies or forwards outside the group need explicit permission from everyone involved. Keep things relevant to the group’s purpose, and think before forwarding chain messages or unverified information. Gossip and criticism of others, however casually intended, can cause real hurt and is not the culture we are building here. A quieter group where every message lands with purpose is far better than a busy one nobody reads.

Safeguarding and Privacy

Care should always be taken to protect people's privacy. Personal details such as addresses, phone numbers, or sensitive situations should not be shared without clear consent. Direct messaging with children or vulnerable individuals should only take place where it is part of an agreed and approved safeguarding approach as set out in the Safeguarding Policy. All communication must align with the church's safeguarding policies at all times.

All WhatsApp communication relating to church activity should be treated as subject to data protection law, including the UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018. Churches are required to respond to subject access requests under this legislation, and this includes messages sent via WhatsApp. This means anything written in a church WhatsApp group could be disclosed and should be written with that in mind.

Group Management

Each WhatsApp group should have a clear purpose and one or more named administrators. Administrators are responsible for helping to keep conversations appropriate and on track. Where necessary, they may step in to guide discussions, remove inappropriate content, or take action if the guidelines are not being followed.

Boundaries

Everyone should be mindful of timing and volume of messages. Late night messaging should be avoided unless something is urgent, and there should be no expectation of immediate responses. WhatsApp is not always the right channel for urgent, complex, or sensitive matters, and alternative communication methods should be used where appropriate.

Faith and Conduct

Our communication should reflect our faith and the way we are called to treat one another. "Let everything you do be done in love." – 1 Corinthians 16:14. Even in quick messages, our tone and content should demonstrate care, respect, and encouragement.

Breaches

If this policy is not followed, action may be taken. This could include reminders of expected behaviour, removal from WhatsApp groups, or further steps where appropriate, in line with church leadership and safeguarding policies.

Current List of Official Groups

Group	Purpose	Administrators
WBC Leadership Team	Between meeting communication	Current deacons and Moderator. Minister to be added when vacancy filled
Start the week	Prayer requests and practical administration communications	Christine and Jan
WBC admin and Finance	Hannah and Deb discussion of financial matters to keep separation from personal whatsapp chat	Deb / Hannah
Pastoral Care Team	Prayer requests and practical administration communications	All members

New Manse	Updates and urgent communication	Tim, Hannah, Mike, Susanah
Fabric/Admin/Deacon link up	Building and Fabric team chat including treasurer and administrator	Hannah
The Lounge	Lounge leaders communication	Youth worker phone
Cameo	Between group communication	
The Family Space	Between group communication	Youth worker phone