LRCC Social Media Policy

1. Purpose of policy

Lightning Ridge Community Church (LRCC) is on about building Christ's church, in the Ridge on the solid rock of Jesus Christ and his good news, gospel word.

To reach our parish with the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, we are committed to building a strong and vital online presence which will complement and enhance our efforts to grow and deepen our networks in the local community.

This policy provides a framework to help our staff and volunteers understand their responsibilities in using social media for parish and personal purposes; and to confidently engage with others on social media, in order to promote awareness of, and interest in, the message of Jesus Christ and our church activities and events.

2. Application and scope

This policy applies to all parish employees and volunteers who use social media on behalf of the parish in a formal capacity. It is also relevant to other congregation members, who are encouraged to abide by it (see the table at the end of this policy for examples on how it applies).

This policy covers the use of social media for parish-related and personal purposes, by staff and volunteers, and using church and personal resources.

This policy must be read together with *Faithfulness in Service: A national code for personal behaviour and the practice of pastoral ministry by clergy and church workers*, as well as any other future related policies (e.g. e-mail, internet access, IT use policies) as amended from time to time.

Please note this policy applies in addition to all other safe ministry obligations, which are set out in *Faithfulness in Service* and other documents such as the Diocesan *Safe Ministry Policy*.

This policy can be reviewed and amended by the Parish Council at any time. It does not form a part of any employee's contract of employment and imposes no contractual obligations on the parish.

Social media sites have their own terms and conditions which apply separately to this policy.

3. Definitions

Social media refers to websites and applications that enable the creation, sharing and publication of posts or otherwise supports online social interactions, including (but not limited to):

- social networks (eg Facebook and LinkedIn);
- enterprise tools (eg Microsoft Teams and SharePoint);
- video and image sharing tools (eg YouTube and Instagram);
- messaging tools (eg Twitter, Snap Chat and Messenger);
- blogs
- discussion forums (eg Reddit); and,
- podcasts

Post means any content created, shared or published on a social media platform or sent or shown to another user, or the act of creating, sharing or publishing such content.

Moderation is the act of reviewing, editing, approving and/or rejecting a post published on a social media platform. It may be done prior to, during or after, publication of a post.

Volunteer is any person not employed by the parish, who uses social media on behalf of the parish in a formal capacity.

For the purposes of our context, this policy also applies to the use of the LRCC website.

4. Policy statement

As an ambassador for Christ in the online community, you must be mindful of how you come across on social media. Always:

- ensure your posts are true and accurate to the best of your knowledge;
- comply with your legal obligations, including in relation to intellectual property, confidentiality and privacy;
- assume that nothing you post is private, and that anything posted, liked or shared via social media may be publicly viewable, searchable and/or remain permanently online (even if you delete the original post);
- refrain from posting anything that is obscene, threatening, derogatory, defamatory or hateful to or about another person or entity; and
- be careful not to bring the parish into disrepute.

If you are unsure about whether to post something, or are concerned about a post you've seen, speak to your Vicar, a Warden or another staff member as appropriate.

This policy applies to the use of social media (incl the church website) in two contexts:

A. Using social media on behalf of the parish in a formal capacity

Parishes are encouraged to use social media (incl. the church website) to engage with people about Jesus and to raise awareness about the parish and its activities.

Only certain people have access to the parish's website and social media accounts and are authorised to use social media and post on behalf of the parish in a formal capacity, including to:

- maintain the parish's profile pages on social media and the church website; and
- post on social media and the website for and on behalf of the parish, such as promoting church events, writing articles for blogs and providing their comments on social media.

B. Using social media in a personal capacity

Because your online persona reflects on your character and may affect the parish's reputation, when using social media in a personal capacity:

- **parish staff and volunteers who use social media on behalf of the parish in a formal capacity *must comply* with this policy** (and all other parish and Diocesan policies concerning personal behaviour which may be in force from time to time when using social media), and
- **other congregation members who do not use social media on behalf of the parish in a formal capacity *are strongly encouraged to comply* with this policy** (and all other parish and Diocesan policies concerning personal behaviour which may be in force from time to time when using social media).

When posting in a personal capacity, it should be clear that your comments do not represent the parish in any way, and you must not use parish social media accounts to make them.

It may be helpful to insert a disclaimer in your social media profile or posts to the effect that the comments are your own, and are not endorsed by the parish.

In both of these contexts, you must use social media in accordance with the following guidelines.

5. Guidelines for using social media

Your conduct online should always be 'above reproach'.

Following these guidelines will equip you to use social media (incl. the church website) in a positive way and contribute meaningfully to growing the parish's online presence and outreach efforts.

a) Be a good ambassador for Christ and the parish at all times;

b) **Don't break the law!** Do not post anything which is unlawfully discriminatory, defames anyone's reputation, condones unlawful activity or unlawfully infringes on the rights of others;

c) **Respect confidential information**. Do not disclose any confidential information, especially personal information regarding children;

d) **Avoid online controversies**. If you must, state your views politely and respectfully, but avoid unhelpful debates about controversial issues. Consider inviting people to meet for a chat in person instead;

e) **Re-read before posting**. Step back, re-read your post and think about what it communicates to others – and how they might react - before publishing or sending it.

f) **Ask for advice**. If you aren't sure about whether to post something, or are concerned about a post you've seen, speak to your Vicar, a Warden or another staff member as appropriate.

People who manage and administer parish social media and website pages may moderate posts to ensure that they are suitable for publication and to avoid legal claims. The parish reserves the right to edit, amend, delete, or otherwise respond to any posts which are considered inappropriate.

6. Privacy and confidentiality

A social media platform's security settings will not necessarily protect your privacy or keep your posts private. Expect that your posts may be copied, shared and read out of context.

It is wise to set strong privacy settings and review them regularly. Do not share personal information such as your home address or bank account details.

Do not rely on anonymity or pseudonyms (fake names) for protection or to avoid being found to have breached this policy. Posts can be traced back to you.

7. Breach of policy

Any breach of this policy may lead to disciplinary action, which may range from a warning or requirement to remove the post/s, up to termination of your engagement with the parish, depending on the severity of the breach. If you breach the law, you may also be held personally liable.

If any person becomes aware of or suspects a breach of this policy, they should contact the Vicar, a Warden or another staff member as appropriate. Any information disclosed will be dealt with seriously and confidentially.

Who	Resources	Use	Example	Policy applies
Employees	Church resources	Church-related purposes	Dave administers the church website. He uses the church computer to manage it.	Yes, because he is a paid church employee using social media for church purposes and he represents the church and is using church resources.
		Personal	Dave engages in online discussions and makes comments in forums. He uses the church computer to contribute.	Yes, because he is a paid church employee and represents the church and is using church resources.
	Personal or other resources	Church-related purposes	Dave administers the church website. He uses his personal computer to manage it.	Yes, because he is a paid church employee using social media for church purposes and he represents the church.
		Personal	Dave engages in online discussions and makes comments in forums. He uses his personal phone and computer to contribute.	Yes, because he is a paid church employee and represents the church.
Volunteers	Church resources	Church-related purposes	Carmel administers her church Facebook page. She uses her personal Facebook account through the church computer to manage it.	Yes, because she is using social media for church purposes and using church resources.
		Personal	Sarah uses her personal Facebook account through the church computer.	Volunteers should not use church resources to use social media for non-church purposes except in exceptional circumstances.
	Personal or other resources	Church-related purposes	Hannah administers the church Facebook page. She uses her personal Facebook account through her personal phone and work computer to manage it.	Yes, because she is using social media for church purposes.
		Personal	Steph uses her personal Facebook account to stay in touch with friends and buy and sell items. She uses her personal phone and work computer to manage it.	No, because she is not using social media for church purposes, using church resources nor formally representing the church. However, as a Christian seeking to honour Christ in her online activity, she is strongly encouraged to adhere to the parish Social Media Policy.