

Social Media Guidelines for OpenGate Staff and Volunteers

Version 1 created June 2021 adopted 28th July 2021

Purpose

These guidelines have been created to encourage conversations that reflect our values. We want a culture of honour in all that we do, and in all of our interactions.

Social Media is now part of daily life for many individuals and organisations. It can be used positively to share values and beliefs, used well it can be used as a tool to share Jesus Christ and to encourage discipleship and community. However, we need to use social media with wisdom, remembering that there is greater potential for miscommunication to occur than in an in-person conversation, and that whatever is said on social media should be regarded as being public and permanent, even if quickly deleted.

“Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.” *Philippians 4:8 (NIV)*

Guidelines:

Be safe.

We are committed to the safeguarding, care and nurture of everyone within our church community. The safety of individuals, including children, young people and vulnerable adults must be maintained. Our [Safeguarding Policy](#) details how social media should be used with children, youth and vulnerable adults, consent information regarding use of social media, photos and videos for individual children; it can be found on ChurchSuite.

Be respectful and honouring.

We affirm the importance of treating everyone with dignity, respect and fairness. Do not post or share content that is sexually explicit, inflammatory, hateful, abusive, threatening or otherwise disrespectful.

If other people are featured in your post consider whether you have appropriate consent for this, if not please ask them in advance.

Be kind.

Treat others how you would wish to be treated and assume the best in people. If you have a criticism or critique to make, consider both *whether* you would say it in person, and the tone you would use. It is not always possible to convey tone in text!

Take responsibility.

You are accountable for the things you do, say and write. Text and images shared can be public and permanent, even with privacy settings in place or once deleted. If you're not sure, don't post it.

Be a good ambassador.

Personal and professional life can easily become blurred online so think before you post. Remember that your account may be the first impression people are getting of the church, try to respond quickly and in a welcoming manner.

Be honest and accurate.

Don't mislead people about who you are.

If you have access to a church social media account, make sure there is a clear distinction between it and your personal social media accounts. Regularly monitor your social media and webpages to make sure that the information available is up to date.

Disagree well.

Some conversations can be places of robust disagreement and it's important we apply our values in the way we express them.

Each church may find it useful to include a code of conduct on their social media pages, there is an example at the end of the document.

Credit others.

Acknowledge the work of others. Respect copyright and always credit where it is due. Be careful not to release sensitive or confidential information and always question the source of any content you are considering amplifying.

Follow the rules.

Abide by the terms and conditions of the various social media platforms themselves. If you see a comment that you believe breaks their policies, then please report it to the respective company. Be aware of your privacy settings, and check that they are as you expect after any updates to privacy settings.

[How will we respond to people who breach our social media community guidelines?](#)

We may act if we receive complaints or spot inappropriate, unsuitable or offensive material posted on the social media accounts. This may include deleting comments, blocking users or reporting comments as appropriate.

[Who do I speak to for further advice?](#)

If you have a safeguarding concern please report this as soon as possible to:

safeguarding@opengatecc.org.uk

For other queries please contact rachel.gallant@opengatechurches.net

Code of conduct – example as recommended in 'disagree well'

Thank you for visiting us on Facebook! The following is a list of guidelines for commenting on our posts – we're basically asking you to show respect for all users, stay positive and generate good conversations. So:

- Please stay on-topic
- No offensive language

- No personal attacks (hostile, derogatory or deliberately insulting comments toward a specific individual or group)
- Don't say things to people in a way that you wouldn't want them said to you
- No bullying, intimidation or hate speech
- No flaming or trolling (posting comments intended to induce an angry response)
- No spamming