



SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Purpose

The purpose of this Social Media Policy is to clearly articulate to all members and adherents of Church@TheGabba the Church Leadership's expectations of all people who profess the name of Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, and who call Church@TheGabba their spiritual home, regarding the use of Church@TheGabba web and Facebook pages and various other social media and electronic communication systems that may exist from time to time.

Preamble

This Policy is predicated on the Scripture passages of Matthew 18:15 – 20, Ephesians 4: 1 – 16, 2 Peter 1:3 - 8 and Philippians 4:8.

The Church Leadership recognise that the use of Social Media is a contemporary phenomenon that has both positive and negative aspects.

On the positive side, modern technology, social media and electronic communications enable people to be in contact and communicate without geographical, financial, and time restrictions. Social Media can be a good way of keeping people connected and informed.

However, Social Media, if not used sensibly, can be an impersonal and superficial replacement for real and personal relationships, as well as providing unlimited opportunity for intrusion on individual and group privacy and protection. Insensitive and intemperate Social Media posts and updates can also reflect poorly on the person posting, as well as on their associates and other connections.

In general terms, the Church Leadership sees that Social Media can serve good purposes when used with sensitivity and discernment. It remains essential that Staff and Volunteers continue to adhere to the Church's Code of Conduct for standards of behaviour when interacting with young people via online platforms.

Consequently, the following Policy items have been developed for guidance with regard to the people, life and ministries of Church@TheGabba, being mindful of the passages of Scripture quoted above.

Policy

1. Church Internet Pages

The Church Internet Pages are open for members to be active and interact with each other. All Church Internet Pages are strictly monitored and moderated. The following policy applies to all Church Internet Pages:

1. Any offensive, or inappropriate, material posted on the Church Internet Pages will be removed.
2. Anyone posting offensive, or inappropriate, material on the Church Internet Pages will be removed as a member of the Church Internet Pages.
3. Where/when possible, reasons for the removal of posts will be given.
4. Church and personal confidentiality must be observed and practiced at all times.
5. No unattributed copyrighted material is to be posted on the Church Internet Pages.

6. Each member of each Church Internet Page is to exercise a shared responsibility to keep the page positive, informative and uplifting, and of reporting to the moderator of the page when something appears that is not in line with these principles.
7. Social media is not the appropriate medium or forum to resolve interpersonal or leadership issues that may arise from time to time within the Church membership or congregation in general.

2. Photographs of Children and Young People

It is the Policy of the Church Leadership that, in relation to children and young people:

1. Photographs of children will not be used for promotional purposes without the permission of a parent or guardian.
2. The Church does not approve of anyone posting photographs or other details of children under the age of 13 on any social media platform. Even well-intentioned and innocent posting of photos etc. of children can place them, and their families, in potentially awkward and dangerous situations.
3. The Church does not approve of anyone posting photographs, or other details, of young people between the ages of 13 and 18 years without the express permission of the young person and his/her parent or guardian.
4. Parents are welcome to take photographs of their own children's involvement in Church activities, however these photographs must comply with this policy where children other than their own are included in the photographs.

3. Streaming

It is the Church policy that when streaming is used:

1. Links to streamed events such as Church services may be made publicly available. Participants on Church streaming events via Facebook and other Social Media will be monitored and any inappropriate behaviour will result in removal from the streaming event.
2. No images of young people will be used in the streaming of Church events without the permission of a parent or guardian. If a Church event is live-streamed, parents / guardians will be advised at the beginning that the event is being live streamed and they should stay out of camera range or in a designated area if they do not wish images of their child / young person to be included in the stream.
3. The church does not approve of anyone taking photographs or screenshots of streaming events.

4. Video Conferencing

It is the Church policy that when video conferencing is used:

1. When a video conference includes members of the public and involves children or young people, the private chat function will be disabled. Group chat functions that are visible to all people attending the video conference can be used and will be monitored.
2. Any inappropriate behaviour will result in removal from the video conference.
3. When a video conference involves children or young people, the video conference must always involve a minimum of two Staff and/or Volunteers and a minimum of two children or young people.
4. Consideration will be given to gender dynamics in group discussions especially in groups involving children and young adults. For example, in a group discussion where the Leader is one gender and all of the participants are of the opposite gender.
5. The Church does not approve of anyone taking screen shots during video conferences.

5. Social Media

Church policy for use of Social Media is provided below.

1. Apart from as provided for in previous sections, links to any online platform must only be made available to those invited into the group or within platforms that are not publicly accessible Links must not be forwarded or otherwise provided to parties outside the group without the permission of the ministry leader (e.g. Youth Group leader).

2. Ministry leaders are responsible for maintaining group membership and ensuring that the use of the Social Media platforms complies with this policy and the terms of the platform (e.g. Facebook and Instagram have a minimum age of 13 years to have a personal account).
3. Private chat functions through these platforms will be disabled when children and young people are involved. Group chat functions that are visible all members of the group chat can be used and will be monitored. The Church acknowledges that it cannot monitor chat functions through applications that are not used in the Church ministry event (for example, private chats in Facebook will not be visible if the Church is video conferencing in Zoom).
4. Consideration will be given to gender dynamics especially in groups involving children and young adults. For example, a group discussion where the Leader is one gender and all the participants are of the opposite gender is not preferred.
5. Photographs/screenshots will not be permitted.
6. Care must be taken with online communication, and consideration given to how an engagement may be perceived differently by those who view/receive it. For example, ensuring the text/image is beyond reproach and cannot be misconstrued.
7. The Church and Staff/Volunteers should not use social media platforms which cannot be traced for ministry activities.

6. *Communication with Children*

For many of our young people, online platforms such as social media, text messaging, and video are a natural way for them to interact and express themselves. This affords an opportunity for the Church to create safe places for young people to build community, explore faith and grow as disciples, and to receive care and support.

Caution must be taken however, when engaging with young people in the various forms of electronic communication and social media. Intentional boundaries are fundamental to keeping young people safe. As such, this policy provides guidance in ways to deliver ministry in an online context.

The following policy applies to communication with children to ensure all communication occurs in a safe manner.

Consent and Group Setup

1. Parental/Guardian consent must be in place before engaging online or via any form of electronic communication with a child. Consent must be given in writing to meet the principle of traceability. No online engagement or electronic communications can occur where consent has not been given or where the parent/guardian has indicated that they do not want online communications to take place between their child and Staff and/or Volunteers.
2. Consent forms will be stored either physically and/or electronically in accordance with the Church's Privacy Policy and made accessible only to the Ministry leaders.
3. Login details will be confidential and will not be provided to parties outside the particular ministry (e.g. Youth Group) without the parent's / guardian's consent. Consideration will be given to the data protection and privacy policies of each online platform used by the Church. It should be possible to review any online activity / engagement for a platform that is used. Consideration will also be given to whether the platform to be used has a digital footprint, and whether this can be accessed if the need arises. If a digital footprint is not available, a risk assessment should be made for the platform prior to the first use of the platform for a group activity.
4. Staff and Volunteers will not be Facebook friends or Twitter followers with children.
5. Electronic communication and social media use with children will occur through Church Internet Pages and in a group context not in private. Private Facebook accounts can be used to join a group however communication must remain public within the group chat. As an example, parents, Youth Group Members and Youth Group Leaders in the Church Youth Group are involved in a group chat in Facebook Messenger that is open to all parents, Youth Group Members and Youth Group Leaders.
6. The Church's preference is for any online group involving children 12 years or younger to be set up using only a Parent/Guardian's email and login, and Parental/ Guardian consent is required to allow teenagers to use their own emails and login. Login-in details must not disclose a child's full name. The Church acknowledges however

that it is not always possible to identify the accounts used (for example in Zoom) and parents / guardians remain responsible for monitoring child / youth access to Social Media.

7. Where possible and practical, the permission of a parent or guardian will be sought before phoning or messaging a child or teenager outside of the Church Internet Pages and this contact should occur between the hours of 8am and 10pm.
8. Where a child contacts Staff or a Volunteer by telephone, SMS or Social Media privately, the Staff or Volunteer should attempt to call their home phone, whenever possible and appropriate, so that their parents are made aware of the conversation, whilst ensuring the child's privacy is respected.
9. All emails to children and vulnerable persons should have either a Church email address cc'd into them or the email address of a supervising Church leader.
10. SMS communication will be restricted to providing general and publicly available information.
11. Emails and SMS messages that are sent or received should be kept and stored in an appropriate place.
12. Chat history must be retained.
13. Consider privacy settings which prevent personal contacts from seeing or interacting with the young people contacts connected to your ministry.
14. Staff and Volunteers will not engage in video conversation with children without the permission of a parent or guardian, and only after explaining the purpose of the video conversation.

7. Self

As ambassadors of Christ and members of His Church, we believe it is necessary to be prudent and discerning on what we post on our own Social Media so that nothing we do will negatively reflect on Church@TheGabba, ourselves and most importantly, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Definitions

<i>Church</i>	means Church@TheGabba and also includes the associated ministries and activities of the church.
<i>Church Internet Pages</i>	means the Church@TheGabba web page, the Church@TheGabba Facebook page, the Church@TheGabba Youth Group Facebook page, the Mustard Seed Facebook page, the Mainly Music Facebook page and any other Facebook or web pages associated with Church activities.
<i>Church Leadership</i>	means the primary governing group of the church such as the board, elders or deacons.
<i>Social Media</i>	means technology based means of communicating including but not limited to telephones, Internet web pages, Facebook, Zoom, Messenger and other video conferencing and electronic media.
<i>Staff</i>	means paid employees of Church@TheGabba.
<i>Streaming</i>	means the transmission of audio and video over the internet without downloading a file to a device.
<i>Video Conferencing</i>	means a meeting or discussion between two or more people using computer networks to transmit audio and visual data. Examples include Zoom, Skype and Messenger.
<i>Volunteer</i>	means someone who is working in an unpaid capacity as part of a planned program of activity at the Church. This includes any Church members, adherents, friends or others who may offer their services at Church@TheGabba, The Mustard Seed and other Church activities and ministries from time to time.
<i>Youth Group Member</i>	means a child under the age of 18 who participates in Church@TheGabba Youth Group.
<i>Youth Group Leaders</i>	means a volunteer or Church leader who leads the Church@TheGabba Youth Group.