

Safeguarding Guidelines for Online Meetings



Introduction

Social media and online meetings are a very public way of enabling us as Christians to live out our calling to share the good news of Jesus Christ. One of its many joys is that it is immediate, interactive, conversational and open-ended. This opportunity comes with a number of downsides if users do not apply the same common sense, kindness and sound judgement that we would use in a face-to-face encounter.

These guidelines provide guidance on how our church uses the internet, video/audio online conferencing, webinars and screen sharing. The aim is to protect the meetings from how people join to how information is shared. These sessions are strictly for Bible Study, Prayer and Fellowship, Coffee Hubs and Virtual Messy Church. It outlines how we expect the person responsible and the participants of the meetings to behave. Extreme vigilance is advised when using these platforms.

Guidelines

1. The person(s) leading the meetings is(are) responsible for the proper and legitimate use of the platform and the code of conduct.
 - a. All group leaders to keep a record of their meetings: date, time, people attending and the overall theme.
 - b. Leaders should set clear guidelines as to how the session is to be conducted.
 - c. All leaders should be Level 2 Safeguarded (according to the Church of England Diocesan Safeguarding Policy).
 - d. The leader should remove or stop inappropriate posts/conversations, explain why and inform all who may be affected (incl. parents of any children involved).
2. All personal matters shared during the sessions should be kept strictly confidential. (Except if it involves a safeguarding concern e.g. if the information shared could harm the individual or public. All safeguarding concerns should be addressed to the Safeguarding Officers and the Chaplain of St. Alban's Church, Copenhagen.)
 - a. All personal information such as name, address, email address, phone numbers and other similar identifiers should be kept confidential.
 - b. Information about jobs, titles, employers etc. should also be kept confidential.
3. The code of conduct during these meetings should be the same as a meeting conducted in person. For example, respect for the individual, individual's race, language, culture, gender, beliefs etc.
 - a. Behaviour and language used should be appropriate and conducive to that session.
 - b. Everyone should be given an opportunity to speak.
 - c. There should not be any compulsion for an individual to speak.
 - d. 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 not just *whether* you would say it in person, but the tone you would use.
 - e. Be honest. Don't mislead people about who you are.
 - f. Disagree well. Some conversations can be places of robust disagreement and it's important we apply our values in the way we express them.
4. Abusive behaviour is strictly prohibited.

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5. If there are concerns about individuals leading/participating in the sessions, they should be directed to the Chaplain or the Safeguarding Officer.
6. Messages/information sent out by the leaders should be approved by the ministry leaders and the chaplain.
7. These sessions should not be used as counselling sessions. All pastoral matters should be referred to the Chaplain and the Ministry Team.
8. Permission is needed to take screenshots, photos, video/audio recordings and can only be posted, with permission on the church's social media platforms.
9. Messy Church leaders should send all communications via the parents/guardians.
 - a. Parents should be asked to give their consent for us to communicate with their children through social media and other means of communication.
 - b. Children below the age of 16 should be supervised by their parents/legal guardians during these sessions.
10. Be aware of so-called "Zoom Bombing" and the like.
 - a. Be on your guard about fake friend requests and phishing scams.
11. Last but not least, grooming. In an age when grooming is on the increase leaders and participants are asked to be vigilant and show mutual care.

How will we respond to people who breach our church's guidelines?

The Church's Chaplain, Ministry Team and Safeguarding Officers will take action if they receive complaints or spot inappropriate, unsuitable or offensive material posted/ conversations had.