
Introduction

Email and texting are powerful communication tools, and essential to the workings of the Benefice. They can be used to complement other forms of communication. They are not a replacement for face to face communication for sensitive matters or imparting information likely to upset.

Scope

This Policy applies to anyone using electronic communication and social media platforms for church business within the Benefice.

Copies of the Policy will be given to new office holders when taking on roles within the Benefice and to all individuals who agree to be included on group email address lists.

Chairs of committees or groups are responsible for ensuring that their committee or group members see and understand the Policy.

Policy

1. We will use email for secretarial business eg circulating rotas; minutes of meetings; notices; documents or thoughts to be discussed at the next meeting.
2. Email can be used for event organisation which needs attention before the next meeting.
3. Email or Microsoft Office 365 *SharePoint* can be used for conducting simple business but is not suitable for business that requires discussion or results in disagreement.
4. Where differences of opinion result through e-conversation, electronic communication should cease, and conversation continue by telephone, face to face or in the next meeting.
5. Allow time to reflect wisely and slowly before responding to emails.

General Guidance and Email etiquette

Be mindful that emails can be misread or misinterpreted. Take time and care when writing and when reading. Emails can be written and saved as drafts to be reread at a later time before sending.

Forwarding emails

Emails are for the recipient(s) only. If it is necessary to do so, forward an email to somebody else, but only if the content of the email is purely business and not confidential or controversial. If in any doubt, consider responding with '*The most appropriate person to deal with this is x. Would you like me to forward your email or would you like to approach directly?*'

Be particularly mindful when forwarding emails from people who are personal friends as well as church partners to avoid confusion over private correspondence and church business.

Blind copying

For data protection reasons blind copying should be used for open group emails eg notices. Blind copying must **not** be used in any other circumstance, without the express permission of a Data Controller.

Closed group emails

When emailing closed groups eg PCC, DCC or committees, the email addresses of all recipients should be available for all to see. This is to ensure that nobody has been inadvertently left off the list and to allow individuals to reply to the whole group.

Intrusion

Give consideration to the timing and content of emails, which can often be received out of working hours on mobile phones or tablets.

Avoid using 'reply to all' unless it is absolutely necessary.

Access to email addresses

Email addresses obtained by being a member of a closed group should only be used for the purposes of communicating with the group on group business. The email address should not be used for other purposes or passed to anyone else. If your email address is used by more than one person this must be made clear to anyone sending emails.

Security

Electronic devices storing other people's personal data should be protected by passwords and a fire wall. Office holders and other people conducting confidential business on behalf of the benefice must have their own email address which only they have access to.

GDPR

Be mindful of information written in emails. Emails to or from @witneyparish.org.uk addresses can be accessed at a later date even if deleted.

Posting on Social Media

Witney Benefice has Social Media accounts, currently *Twitter* and *Facebook*. Members of the Church acting in an official capacity can request permission from the Data Controllers to become a contributor.

Anyone approved by the Data Controllers to post on social media on behalf of the Benefice will sign to say they have read the Safeguarding Policy and agree to comply.

Contributors do not need authorisation to post 'factual' non-controversial entries about Church events, such as date, time and venue, or positive feedback to or from others. However, contributors using the Benefice *Twitter* or *Facebook* accounts must not post or retweet non-factual 'subjective' posts, or post photos naming individuals, without their consent. Before retweeting, it is important to check the original source of the tweet for appropriate content.

If a contributor is unsure whether a post is appropriate they must seek approval from the Parish Data Controllers. This Policy does not preclude Staff or any other members of the Church from posting 'subjective' material via their own personal Social Media accounts.

Before posting photographs on Social Media, refer to the Diocese of Oxford *Making and Publishing images of Children*.

This policy is to be read in conjunction with General Data Protection Regulations and the Benefice Safeguarding Policy.

Adopted by Witney PCC on 8 October 2018

Signed *Toby Wright*

Counter-signed *Charlotte Tremain*

Review date: one year from date of adoption