



South Central TEI – Social Media Policy

Agreed July 2019

Introduction

Training for ministry is a time of change; you are no longer an entirely free-agent, **but are becoming a public figure who represents an institution**, and that only intensifies after licensing or ordination. Many ministry students will already have some sort of presence on social media as they start training, so it is important to be aware of how this online presence is viewed in the online world, as well as in face-to-face relationships. Using social media is simply a part of daily life. It is a way of sharing who you are, but through it you also present as an ambassador for the wider Church and the Christian faith in some form, to an unknown audience.

These guidelines are based on principles of common sense and good judgement. Essentially, you should participate online in the same way as you would in any other public forum. Your actions should be consistent with your work and Christian values, and you are responsible for the things you do, say or write. Failure to adhere to this policy may result in the TEI disciplinary process being initiated.

- **Be safe.** The safety of children, young people and vulnerable adults must be maintained at all times. Be mindful of who might be at risk. If you have any concerns, ask the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser.
- **Be respectful.** Do not post or share content that is sexually explicit, inflammatory, hateful, abusive, threatening or otherwise disrespectful.
- **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. As a general rule, disputes, criticisms and disagreements are better handled face to face.
- **Be honest.** Don't mislead people about who you are.
- **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. 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.
- **Disagree well.** Some conversations can be places of robust disagreement and it is important that we retain Christian values in how we express that disagreement.
- **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.

You might want to think about signing up to the latest Church of England Digital Charter <https://www.churchofengland.org/terms-and-conditions/our-digital-charter>