

Churches Media Guide

Contents

1. [Introduction](#)
2. [Getting consent](#)
3. [Copyright](#)
4. [Taking a good photo or video](#)
5. [Your website](#)
6. [Using social media](#)
7. [Positive engagement on social media](#)
 - 7.1 [Tagging](#)
 - 7.2 [Collaboration posts](#)
 - 7.3 [Engagement best practices](#)
8. [Responding to the media](#)
9. [Writing a press release](#)

Introduction

Effective communication and engagement is key for a church to connect with its members and the wider community. This guide outlines some best practices for communications in a church setting, helping you to engage with your audiences using media that is compliant with regulations and of a good quality.

This guide covers the main queries that churches have for the diocese Media and Engagement team. If your questions are not answered here, please get in touch with us at any time.

Email: Communications@diocant.org

Phone: 01227 459401

Getting consent

Photos, video and audio taken by you of your church activities are always preferable to using stock images as this shows the personality and individuality of your community.

Before taking photos, capturing videos or audio, please ensure that you have consent from those featuring in it. Particular care must be taken with children and vulnerable adults. You can find our diocese's [media consent form](#) which you can customise to apply to each situation where you might be capturing photos and videos.

In some instances, it could be difficult to obtain permission from everyone, such as at events with large groups of people. In this case, please make it clear that photos and/or videos will be captured at the event. This could be done by announcing it, putting it in correspondence beforehand, or by putting up posters at the event. In any of these instances, it must be clearly stated that those who do not consent to having their image or voice recorded should notify the event organiser and the person capturing the media. The person filming or taking pictures must then ensure that these individuals aren't included in any photos, videos or sound recordings.

Anyone has the right to withdraw their media consent at any time, and, if this happens, you must delete any footage that includes them, both from the device it was captured on and anywhere that it has been uploaded or shared.

Copyright

If you don't have enough of your own content, you may consider using someone else's images, photos or audio. However, you need to consider who owns it, or who is the copyright owner. Using content without owning the copyright could result in a fine being issued, and unfortunately this has happened to churches in our diocese and elsewhere. Technology now makes it very easy for owners of copyrighted material to find if their content has been used without permission, so think carefully before adding images to your newsletters or websites.

You can find a useful [copyright guide](#) from the Church of England.

Taking a good photo or video

Many mobile phones can take high quality photos, meaning that you have content creation at your fingertips.

Whether using a phone or camera to do this, there are some handy tips to consider, such as framing your subject and equipment you could use. The Church of England have put together a [filming set up guide](#) which you may find useful.

Your website

AChurchNearYou.com is a free resource from the Church of England which allows people to find a church, as well as set up a free website for a church or benefice.

If setting up a website for your church, you can populate it with information about your church as well as the services and events you have going on there.

Visit the [Church of England page](#) all about [A Church Near You](#) to see how you can get the most out of this resource.

Using social media

Before you get started, it is worth considering how much time you have to maintain a social media presence and which platforms are most relevant for your audiences. It's better to use one account well than spread yourself too thinly and have accounts which are left dormant.

The Church of England has a [social media guide](#) to help you set up and manage an account for your church.

Social media can be useful for churches, with benefits including:

- Promotion of events
 - Sharing about events and services you have coming up on your social media is a great way to encourage more people to come along, who perhaps haven't come across your church or its services before. You can also share links to book and live stream.
- Reaching out and engaging with the community
 - A social media presence for your church can allow other social media users to interact with your content, whether that be 'liking' a post, commenting, or sending a message, perhaps asking a question. This means that you can respond to queries and engage with a potentially untapped new community.
- Encouraging spiritual growth
 - This could be in the form of sharing prayers, readings or talks.
- Boosting fundraising
 - You could share a website link or a QR code which goes to your giving page.
- Sharing multimedia content
 - Using social media can give you a place to share your content in different forms, whether that is in photos, video, or audio.
- Growing young disciples
 - The average congregant age in our diocese is 71. With the largest age demographic of social media users being 25 to 34-year-olds, using social media could encourage engagement with a younger demographic.

Positive engagement on social media

Here are some ways that you can engage with other users on your social media to expand its reach and encourage interaction.

Tagging

Firstly, you can tag an account in your post. This could be that a specific organisation which was present at the event you have posted about. Alternatively, you might want to make an account or person aware of your post - tagging them is a way of doing this. For instance, tagging the Diocese of Canterbury social media account in a post that you think would be good to share with us. Instagram have an [article on social media tagging](#) which you might find useful.

Collaboration posts

This Instagram feature allows you to share a post, which can come from your account as well as another account. It is useful when publishing a post about a joint event or releasing a joint message. The likes and comments are attributed to both accounts, meaning that it helps to bring in a new audience and greater engagement to the accounts. You can watch this [post collaboration tutorial](#) to see a walkthrough of this function.

Engagement best practices

Social media should be fun and interactive but, as a very public and shareable medium, there can be a couple of things to consider. These include:

- If someone is asking a question in the comments, encourage them to continue this conversation in a 'direct message' to your account. This is especially helpful if you need to exchange contact details or if the subject matter is controversial.
- When unpleasant comments or messages are left on your post, or sent to your account, it's best to not respond to them. In extreme cases, you can block the account.
- Think carefully before deleting a post. If it is defamatory or contains hate speech, then deletion is a good idea. However, if someone is disagreeing with you without offence, it is better to leave the comment, rather than be accused of silencing someone.
- Check your social media comments and messages regularly and consider making it clear when someone can receive a response.

Responding to the media

Occasionally, you may be approached for comment or interview by the media. This can be because of something initiated by your church, such as a community event, or in response to something happening in your area. When a journalist calls, stay calm and be polite. Ask:

- The name of the person calling and the publication for which they write/broadcast,
- What information they want and by what time,
- A contact number/email.

Listen to the questions they give, but **don't give them an immediate response**. Instead, say: 'Can I call you back? I may need to speak to someone to get more information.'

Then contact the Media and Engagement team on 01227 459401 or out of hours on 07753 454586 or 07743 928045.

The Head of Media and Engagement (HME) or Senior Communications and Engagement Officer (SCEO) have experience with dealing with press enquiries and can provide a single point of contact for journalists. They can offer:

- A consistent response to several enquiries
- May be more awareness of potential pitfalls in conversations with journalists
- A wider view in parishes'/diocese's best interests

The HME and/or SCEO will be able to advise you on how to deal with the call. They may:

- Be able to answer the query directly with a previously drafted response
- Find out more before giving a response and need you to help draft a statement
- Contact any relevant parties to help deal with the enquiry.

You may also get requests for filming to take place at your church. Before giving a response, get in touch with the Media and Engagement team, who will be able to offer advice on this. You can also refer to our [Churches as Film Locations guide](#).

Writing a press release

A well-written press release can be a great way for churches to communicate important events to the public. Whether you're announcing the unveiling of a reliquary or funding to support youth ministry, a press release can grab the attention of the media and engage your local community. Below are some tips to help with writing a strong press release.

Make the headline compelling

Write an attention-grabbing headline that summarises the key message of your press release, whilst ensuring that you use clear language.

E.g., "St John's Church launches community outreach programme to combat hunger in Canterbury".

Write a strong opening paragraph

The opening paragraph should provide the essential details, meaning that even if you didn't read on, you would understand the story. Make sure to include the who, what, when, where and why of the news you are sharing. Keep it concise, engaging and informative.

E.g., “St John’s Church is taking steps to address local hunger issues in Canterbury with the launch of their outreach programme, aiming to make a lasting impact on our community’s well-being.”

Provide relevant details

Follow up with additional paragraphs which supplement the points you have made previously. This could be the date, time or location of events, the purpose of an initiative, or any other noteworthy details.

E.g., “The programme, named ‘Harvest of Hope’, will kick off on [Date] at St. John’s Church Hall, where volunteers will gather to distribute food baskets to families in need on a monthly basis.”

Include quotes

Incorporating quotes from key figures involved in the news story, such as clergy, an event organiser or community leader can help add a human touch and provide a personal perspective.

E.g., “Rev. Joanne Bloggs, Priest in Charge of St John’s Church, expressed her excitement about the programme, saying: ‘Harvest of Hope is an embodiment of our commitment to serving our community and addressing the pressing needs of our neighbours.’”

Case studies and community impact

It is important to highlight the positive impact your church’s activities will have on the local community. Perhaps you could showcase testimonials or stories of those who have benefitted from previous initiatives to highlight the relevance and importance of your news.

E.g., “Previous outreach efforts by St John’s Church have successfully provided over 500 families with nutritious meals, and ‘Harvest of Hope’ aims to expand this impact, fostering a sense of hope and belonging within our community.”

Include contact details

Provide contact details for a media representative to get in touch with if they have any questions or would like further information. This could be a church member or a designated spokesperson.

E.g., “For further information, please contact [Name], [Title], at [Email] or [Phone number].”

Editor’s notes

Conclude your press release with some contextual information, perhaps a brief paragraph about your church, including its mission and history.

E.g., “St John’s Church, founded in [Year], is a cornerstone of the Canterbury community, dedicated to [Mission Statement]. The church has a diverse history of [Any relevant historical

details] and remains committed to serving and uplifting the local community, with Christ at the very centre of its work.”

Proofread

Before distributing your press release, check it thoroughly for grammatical errors, clarity and consistency. Make sure that it is free from jargon, with accessible language appropriate for a broad audience who may not have in depth knowledge on the Church of England. It can be worth getting someone else to read the press release with ‘fresh eyes’, to see if they spot anything to edit.

Distribution

It’s important to consider who your intended audience might be for the press release. Think about reaching out to relevant journalists who cover community events, religion, or local news. Over time, you can build up a portfolio of contacts who you can approach with stories – but make sure to have consent from the relevant journalists if retaining contact details which are not publicly available.