




Diocese of
Guildford 
TRANSFORMING CHURCH
TRANSFORMING LIVES

Social Media

October 2023

This Guide supports the Social Media Training module. It covers the current social media landscape (see date of publication); what tool for what audience; our Social Media Policy and more... .

Social Media – How to Guide

October 2023

Social media is immediate, interactive, conversational and open-ended. This is different from other forms of communication. We have less control, less time and sometimes less information, but we still need to engage and engage well. This means we need to think differently in how we use it, what we say and where we say it.

The Diocese of Guildford believes that social media offers a great opportunity for our churches, chaplaincies, schools and communities. Arguably if the church did not engage with social media, then the church will not engage with a major aspect of our communities' lives. In this digital age, where communities are forming online, we need to be part of the conversation. It is a way for our churches, schools, hospitals and others to branch out beyond their physical boundaries to meet people where they want to be met and be ambassadors for our faith.

This opportunity is not without risks but if people apply the same common sense, kindness and sound judgement that we would use in a face-to-face encounter, social media can be a tool harnessed for good.

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may. [Ephesians 4:29](#)

We assess and manage risk every day, we just need to make sure that we are applying this to our Church practices.

Social Media is a great platform through which churches can branch out, meeting people where they are and being ambassadors for our faith. Having a presence on social media is now considered normal, for both individuals and organisations, it is something that people now expect when they look up an organisation online.

In this how to guide – we will look at the following: -

- Social Media Landscape
- Where your audience may be
- Age of consent, access to tools and boundaries
- Diocesan Social Media Policy.
 - Being an ambassador for Faith
 - Being a person of influence
- Being safe online

Social Media Landscape October 2023


This document contains up to date data as of 6th October 2023, however it will be out of date and not reflective of current stats almost the minute this is printed. As such, data is only included for reference and to set the scene but you can sign up for the latest data directly [here](#).

COVID-19 changed the way we use technology - in a monthly update from Battenhall, an integrated communications consultancy specialising in social media, they reflect that in the first 5-6 weeks of lockdown one “10 years of technology evolution has taken place in front of our eyes”. The pandemic boosted the use of all social networks and as we continue to rebuild it is important to understand the lessons learnt from 2020-2022 and the role that online and social media can play in providing a different way of doing Church.

During the initial lockdown Zoom was the most downloaded free app in the Istore, followed by TikTok and Houseparty – showing an increasing focus on interactive services in our need to break up isolation. Zoom and TikTok still remain in the top 10 globally after a year. Battenhall reported that ‘TikTok is on a tear having reached 1 billion monthly active users in just three years. Fuelled by Gen Z users, the thirst for authentic, user-generated content and video has got other social networks racing to follow suit, but brands still seem unsure about how to tap into TikTok.’¹



Source - <https://blog.apptopia.com/worldwide-us-download-leaders-2020>

¹ Battenhall Monthly edition #127 [Battenhall Monthly #127: Google and Meta unveil AI plans](https://www.campaign-archive.com)  (campaign-archive.com)

10 Most Downloaded Apps in 2022

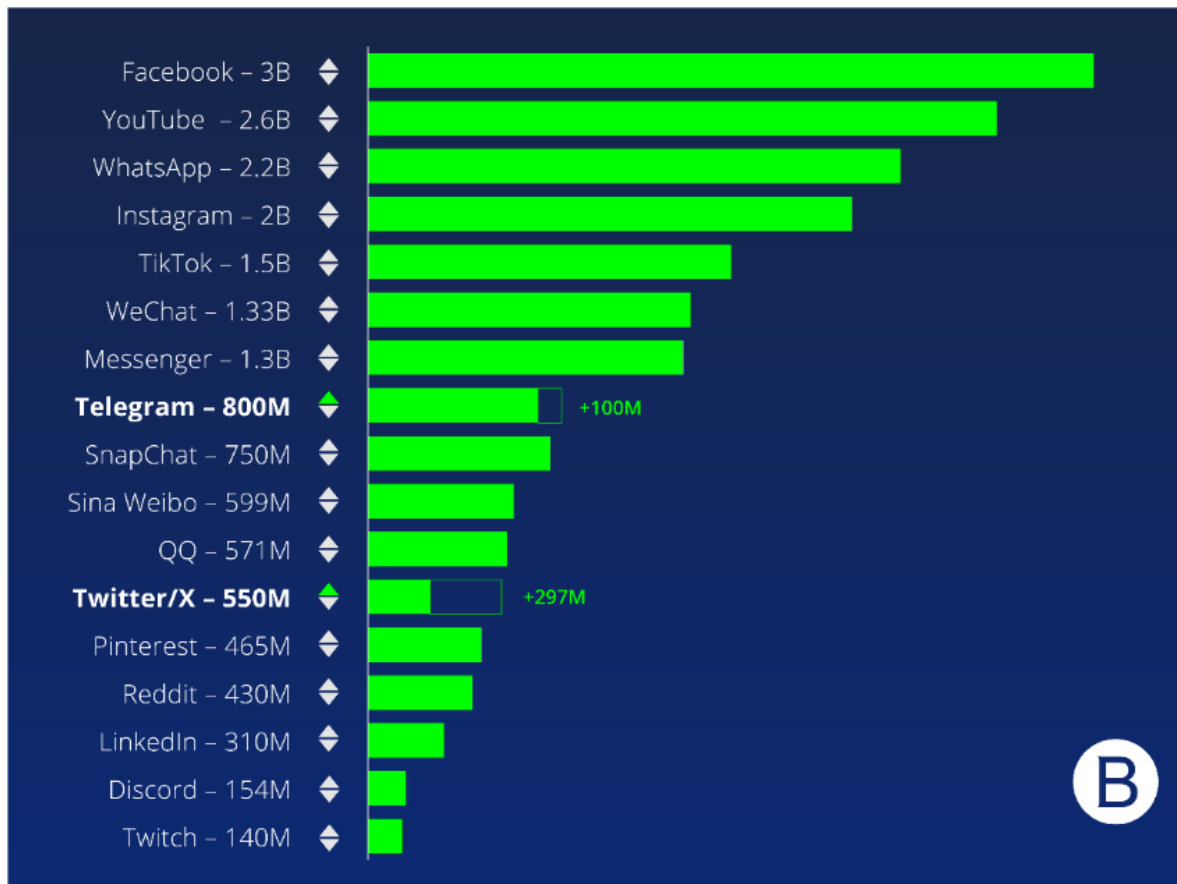
Worldwide

1	 TikTok 672M	6	 Telegram 310M
2	 Instagram 548M	7	 Subway Surfers 304M
3	 WhatsApp 424M	8	 Facebook 298M
4	 CapCut 357M	9	 Stumble Guys 254M
5	 Snapchat 330M	10	 Spotify 238M

Outsmart your competition with app intelligence from apptopia.com 

Source – [Apptopia](https://apptopia.com)

GLOBAL SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE



FB remains the largest social network, but WhatsApp, YouTube and Instagram have passed 2 billion users. For Twitter/now X, the platform has introduced paid for services and nearly 237.8 million daily users were actively sharing.

TikTok continues to rise in popularity with over 1.5 billion subscribers. TikTok is a social media app that allows users to create 15-60 second videos – funny, dancing, singing, lip sync etc but there is a growing amount of Christian content.. 1 billion videos are watched daily.

A number of churches are now signing up to TikTok and you can read about what they are up to or watch the Digital Labs webinar here

<https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/digital-labs/blogs/does-my-church-need-be-tiktok>

Going where people are – different tools for different purposes

Understanding who is using what social media channel can help you determine how you use your Church channels. We want to go where our audience is and provide relevant content.

Channel	Audience	Strategy	Content	Behaviours
Facebook	Facebook has a fairly even demographics per age group ² Fastest growing demographic is +65 Facebook still reaches the largest number of users aged 13-17 Facebook is a great way to reach parents, young people and grandparents	Look at me! Or Look at us!! Building relationships Building communities of like-minded people	Sharing more personal experiences and human connection with your audience. A page is better for churches than a group.	Friend, Like, Follow, Join and comment. Building relationships Finding likeminded people Finding local people.
Twitter	52% men 24-35 is the most dominant age group 70% of users are under 44 years old ³ Twitter is popular with church leaders, local organisations and political groups.	Look at this – providing helpful and relevant information to your followers Joining together with other influencers – politicians, church officials etc	Sharing information that is helpful to your audience. Signpost information	Follow, like and reshare content to connect
YouTube	YouTube is even more dominant in the UK, where it is the most popular app with all age groups outside of retirement age. ⁴	Video centred – Help people find information, share an experience. A platform to hold all your visual content.	50% of users come to understand how to do new things, music videos dominate. Can you appeal to those looking for answers? Can you build music into	Subscribe Comment Share Like Signpost from a website

² Source Hootsuite <https://blog.hootsuite.com/facebook-demographics/>

³ Source Twitter

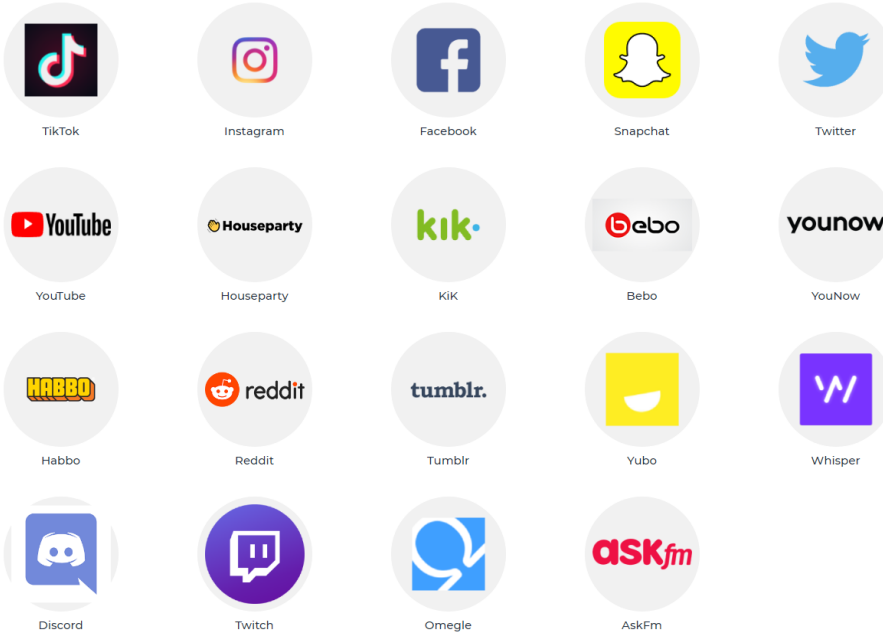
⁴ <https://www.businessofapps.com/data/youtube-statistics/>

			your offering?	
Instagram	Instagram reach for the 13-17 age range is 52.9 million. 75% 18-24 ⁵	Image centred Build connections through liking and interacting with others.	It is a great place to share beautiful images, good quotes/bible verses and powerful testimonies. Images of your church and community in different seasons, shared to correspond with the weather for the day. Images of celebration, worship and community.	Likes, Comments
TikTok	41% of the users are between 16 and 24	Video centred Build connections through liking and interacting with others.	Content ranges from someone sharing an encouraging word or scripture to creative Christ rewrites of songs	Likes, Comments

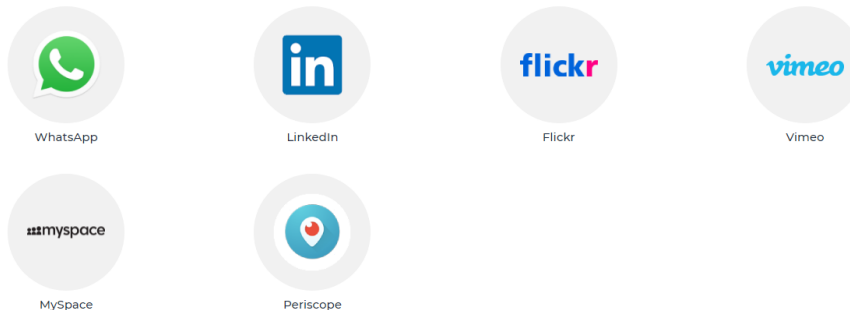
⁵ <https://blog.hootsuite.com/instagram-demographics/>

How old must you be to use these channels?

13 year olds and upwards



16 year olds and upwards



Taken from <https://www.internetmatters.org/resources/what-age-can-my-child-start-social-networking/> - worthwhile visiting this site as you can click on each icon and it will take you to the specific age reference page for that social networking platform.

Bear this in mind when you are deciding which channels to use and how.

Jesus was a master storyteller, can you imagine him in a world with social media? When Jesus appeared to the disciples *'He said to them, 'Go into the world and preach the gospel to all creation' (Mark 16:15).* Social media provides an amazing opportunity to do this and to go and be where people are rather than waiting for them to come to you. However, before you dive in...

Some considerations

- There are many channels and they all require time and effort. Both personally (if you hold a role in the Church or on behalf of the Church, Chaplaincy or School)
 - Have you agreed what you are trying to achieve?
 - Have you got a group of people willing to moderate the channel, share content and manage interactions
 - What do you need to consider in order to use them responsibly, with the age appropriate group and safely?
 - If not, follow these three steps..
- 1. Identify your priorities – who are you trying to reach and what do they want you to say?
- 2. Then identify the channel that will help with this – join it and listen to what is being said – how can you help or join this community
- 3. Focus on doing one channel really well – moderating, curating and listening – once you have built one up, then consider your next priority audience and the next channel you could start using.

Some helpful reading

- <https://www.churchofengland.org/more/church-resources/digital-labs/labs-learning-blog/how-can-clergy-make-most-social-media-heres>
- <https://www.churchofengland.org/more/church-resources/digital-labs/labs-learning-blog/how-can-you-and-your-church-engage-different>
- <https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/digital-labs/labs-learning-blog/our-top-five-tips-develop-effective-church>

The Diocese of Guildford's Social Media Policy

These guidelines have been compiled to help clergy, office holders and employees of the Diocese of Guildford fulfil their role as online ambassadors for their local parish, the wider Church and our Christian faith. These are based on the best practice from the Diocese of Gloucester, Worcester, Exeter, Church of England and the Methodist Church.

The Diocese of Guildford has signed up to the [Church of England Digital Charter](#) and adopted their universal principle based Social media Community Guidelines. We believe that our social media channels and individuals own channels should always be run in a way that reflect our values.

As Christians, the same principles that guide our offline conversations should apply to those that take place online. Interacting through social media does not change our understanding of confidentiality, responsibility and Christian witness. Our actions should be consistent with our work and Christian values and every individual is responsible for the things they do, say or write. Our conversation should be '*seasoned with salt*' ([Colossians 4:6](#)), and these guidelines aim to help us to do so.

- **Be safe.** The safety of children, young people and vulnerable adults must be maintained and is of paramount importance. If you have any concerns, [ask our diocesan safeguarding adviser](#).
- **Protect yourself.** Never share personal details like a home address and phone numbers, except with someone you know and trust. If you decide to do so use a private message. Be aware an address can be disclosed in many ways for example via photos or a GPS position, as well as in written form and once given can be shared by the recipient.
- **Protect information: respect confidentiality, copyright, data protection and legal frameworks.**
 - The existence of social media does not change the Church's understanding of confidentiality however breaking confidentiality over social media can see information spread with alarming speed.
 - Do not share sensitive information to which you might be a privileged party this would include confidential details provided during Bishop's Council; Diocesan Synod, information shared under Chatham House Rules etc.
- **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. [Proverbs 12:25](#)
- **Disagree well.** Some conversations can be places of robust disagreement and it's important we apply our values in the way we express them. Disagreement is not a bad thing but disagreeing well – respecting other opinions and being kind - can make a massive difference in how we engage with others.
- **Be honest.** Don't mislead people about who you are and identify yourself, especially if you are commenting on topics that your identity may change how your comment could be perceived.
- **Take responsibility.** You are accountable for the things you do, say and write.

- Be aware that what you say may attract media interest in you as an individual, especially if perceived that you are acting in an official capacity (even if it's your personal view). If you have any doubts, ask for advice from the Communications Team.
- Text and images shared can be public and permanent, even with privacy settings in place.
- If you're not sure, don't post it and seek guidance.
- **Be a good ambassador.** Personal and professional life can easily become blurred online. As an ambassador for Christ and the Church make sure you disclose your position as a member or officer of the Church, making it clear when speaking personally. Let [Galatians 5:22-26](#) guide your behaviour.
- **Credit others.** Acknowledge the work of others. At times we don't need to reinvent the wheel, but we must acknowledge where the ideas came from.
 - 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.
- **Is it your story to tell?** Consider whether this is someone else's story or voice that should be heard?
- **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.

Enjoy it. It's often easy to focus on the challenges rather than the opportunities of social media but by following these safe guidelines you can enjoy engaging with many different people across the globe, of all faiths and none, and on all topics.

Being an ambassador for Faith

We often refer to someone being an ambassador for faith, but what does this really mean? For Clergy, Lay Leaders or Parish Officers your role means that people will associate your views with the Church and vice versa. Everything you do will be seen through that lens and so you become a spokesperson for faith. Jesus was the ultimate influencers in this respect and he lived his life to reflect this.

As church representatives in social media spaces, you are unusual and interesting. There may be an element of vocational calling in your presence there. You can represent your parish, your denomination, your faith – it's a great responsibility and a great opportunity. As such, you must ensure that content associated with you is consistent with your work and the Christian values of love, tolerance and forgiveness.

Ironically many companies invest heavily in building an online brand and influencers/ambassador but being a Christian is not a part time position its about living your values and demonstrating them in our everyday life. We don't do this so that we can demonstrate these behaviours online, we just do it. As a result, if we choose to share aspects of our lives on social media, indirectly we share what having faith, sharing the gospel means to us and others.

Paul tells Timothy

Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity (1 Timothy 4:12).

Be an example in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and purity. If you use social media wisely, you can shine a light on the church - often through how you act.

This wonderful opportunity also has a cost if not managed well. How do we make sure that our lives aren't consumed by an online profile and how do we reduce a blurring of the lines between private and public life?

Some thoughts

- In social media spaces, the distinction between the public and private arena is blurred. Some clergy chose to have two social media presences – one for their close friends and family, and one for people they know in a professional sphere. This means you have a 'safer' space to let off steam or be silly. If this is not possible, use privacy settings wisely. For example, you may want to keep close friends as friends and your parishioners as acquaintances. The content one group receive will adapt based on the settings.
- Be clear what you are willing to engage with and why?
- Know the Church of England view and be aware when it differs from your own.
- Use your real name when discussing topics relevant to the Church of England or Diocese of Guildford.
- If you have a vested interest in something being discussed, be the first to point it out and why you are engaging.
- If you need to apologise – do!
- Ask for help -we are here for you

Being safe online

Being online is about making sensible choices. As we connect with so many more people outside our usual sphere, we need to consider what and how much we share with them.

Top 10 tips

1. **Check you have the right privacy and security settings** applied for each social channel.
2. **Use strong and different passwords** for each social channel.
3. If it's a parish account think how you **share the password safely** – consider using applications such as commonkey.
4. **Have back up security questions** as a secondary security defence
5. Be careful what **personal detail** you share – while we want to connect with others and sharing experiences is key to this, its important not to overshare. Data theft is a risk, so think before you share home addresses, phone numbers, nicknames, old surnames etc.
6. **Agree consistent approach** to managing friends, followers, group members etc
7. **Know how to respond and react** to anything that may make you feel uncomfortable – be aware of the social networks policy, how to block people and report people, make sure you report any safeguarding issues directly to your Safeguarding officer or the Diocese Safeguarding Advisor.
8. **Know or Agree what your Parish rules are** around each social network, familiarise yourself with the Diocese policy.
9. **Be aware of Social Network guidelines** for use – especially age restrictions
10. **Once you say it, it is permanent** and can't easily be taken back.

More resources

- [Joining social media as a church](#)
- [Social media tips](#)
- [Social media resources](#)
- [YOUTUBE LIVE TUTORIAL](#)
- [FACEBOOK LIVE TUTORIAL](#)
- [GOOGLE HANGOUT](#) – premium version free until July

Want more advise on keeping your child or the children you work with safe online?

- [Thinkuknow](#)
- [Parentzone](#)
- [Parents Protect - Internet Safety](#)
- [ChildNet International](#)
- [A Shared Responsibility: Building Children's Online Resilience by Virgin Media and The Parent Zone.](#)