

Streatham Baptist Church (SBC) Social Media Guidelines

(Based on the Baptists Together and Church of England's Social Media Community Guidelines)
(Approved 3rd December 2024)

1. Introduction

Social Media is a very public way of communicating that can impact several people simultaneously due to its instant, interactive, conversational, unrestricted, often visual exchanges. It therefore provides Christians with unique opportunities to demonstrate Christlike love in action.

All SBC social media posts should align with our mission, vision, and values as we represent not just ourselves but also Jesus and his Church. Every communication should be influenced by the life we have found in Jesus, our desire to love our neighbours, and our hope in helping others do the same.

All SBC Ministers, Leaders, Staff, Church Members and Friends shall follow Biblical Principles, Christian Values and Legal Requirements when using any church related Social Media account but particularly for accounts owned by SBC.

2. Biblical Principles

The list below highlights six key Biblical principles that underpin these Social Media guidelines.

Love	<i>Matthew 22:39 "Love your neighbour as yourself." 1 Corinthians 13:4-6⁴ "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.⁵ It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres."</i>
Respect	<i>1 Peter 2:17: "Show proper respect to everyone."</i>
Humility	<i>Ephesians 4:2a "Be completely humble and gentle."</i>
Patience	<i>Ephesians 4:2b "Be patient, bearing with one another in love."</i>
Wisdom	<i>Proverbs 8:33 "Listen to my instruction and be wise; do not disregard it." Proverbs 3:21 "My son, do not let wisdom and understanding out of your sight, preserve sound judgment and discretion."</i>
Forgiveness	<i>Colossians 3:13 "Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you." Ephesians 4: 31-32 "Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."</i>

3. What will happen if SBC Social Media Guidelines are not followed?

Two designated persons from the leadership team shall investigate the breach. This will include a debriefing meeting with the person who did not follow the guidelines and a recorded note taken. If a formal complaint is made, then the SBC Complaints Policy and Procedure must be followed.

In certain circumstances, this may result in the SBC safeguarding procedures being enacted or a referral to the Police. Any behaviour observed to run contrary to these guidelines may result in church discipline as per our constitution. The person who did not follow the social media guidelines may also be asked to genuinely apologise to seek a reconciliation. The person may be referred to external agencies for further support.

4. Guidelines

1. **Be Loving:** Communicate compassionately. 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 also what *tone* you would use.
2. **Be Respectful:** Every post should communicate respect. Save potentially divisive conversations for real life. Do not post anything that is disrespectful, undermining or offensive, including anything that is sexually explicit, inflammatory, hateful, abusive or threatening. You are accountable for everything you say, write and text. If you're not sure, don't post. Be mindful of different ages, races, socio-economic backgrounds, and experiences. Seek to communicate in the most sensitive way possible so that every person will feel respected and valued.
3. **Be Humble:** Don't mislead people about who you are, what you or others have done and don't misrepresent the truth in any way. Acknowledge the work of others. If you can't verify it, don't share it. Quickly remove, misleading or ill-intended posts with apologies.
4. **Be Patient:** Be careful how you phrase things. Take time to word your communications clearly, being considerate of those who are receiving our communications. Focus on what is excellent, true, praiseworthy, pure and commendable.
5. **Be Wise:** Before circulating videos, images or texts, please check that the information you are sending out is factually correct and that you are confident of the source and origins of the information. Be wary of circulating material from biased or misleading sources. Respect the privacy of others. Do not post personal information or sensitive information others have not consented to be shared. Don't add people to a group without permission.
6. **Be Forgiving:** especially when disagreeing. Apply Christian values when publicly disagreeing with others and ensure how you express yourself is Christlike especially when engaging in robust disagreements. Don't write defamatory comments about others or make any false or unproven statements that damage a person's reputation. Do not write anything you would not want Jesus to read. Don't talk negatively about the church or other Christians. Think about which conversations should take place within the context of the church.
7. **Be safe:** Be aware of safeguarding issues. Special attention that promotes the safety of children, young people and vulnerable adults must be maintained. If you have any concerns, please see the SBC Safeguarding Policy on www.streathambaptist.com or email safeguarding@streathambaptist.com.
8. **Be law-abiding:** Stay within the legal and charitable framework. Follow copyright, Data Protection law and defamation law. Do not forward any explicit or indecent images. Abide by terms and conditions of various social media platforms. If you see a comment that breaches their policies, please report it to the respective company. Never make any comments which could be considered racist, ageist, sexist, or homophobic, or engage in any other conduct that would be considered unacceptable in a Christian environment.

5. Who do I speak to for further advice?

Please email leaders@streathambaptist.com or ring the church office on 0208 769 1515.