SAFEGUARDING WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA BEST PRACTICE FOR CATHOLIC ENTITIES

Church entities are required to communicate the Church's safeguarding message. The purpose of this paper is to clarify both the minimum requirements and best practice for parish and catholic entity websites and on their <u>social media platforms.</u>

SAFEGUARDING WEBSITE MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

Safeguarding Arrangements……

A parish website must have a section labelled "Safeguarding" which, as a minimum, includes:

- The contact details of a local person who can offer safeguarding help and who knows how to respond appropriately to a safeguarding concern or allegation, and
- The contact details of the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor, and
- A link to the diocesan safeguarding website www.cdocsafeguarding.nz

……are clearly visible

There are two choices:

1. To display the safeguarding arrangements on the front page: or
2. To provide a 'Safeguarding' link on the front page.

With option 2, the 'Safeguarding' link should be displayed in a prominent location (not hidden behind a menu). Furthermore, the safeguarding arrangements should be clearly visible once the link is clicked (without the need to click anything else).

…..are on the front page

If a parish has its own website, the 'front page' means the home page.

If a parish shares a website with other parishes, there are two choices. The 'front page' can mean:

- The home page of the website; or
- The main page for the parish.

SAFEGUARDING BEST PRACTICE WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA REQUIREMENTS

The aim of the Catholic Church of New Zealand is to make churches safer and also to create safe places where people feel able to disclose abuse beyond the church (e.g. at home, school or work). In order to facilitate this, parishes/entities may want to consider how they move beyond minimum requirements and embrace best practice, examples of best practices are:

- Active promotion of safeguarding processes, trainings, and information through social media platforms.
- The taking of and/or posting/display of photographs of children only occurs with the written consent of parents/carers.
- Children are not identified by their full name in photographs and all must be mindful of the "Jigsaw" effect regarding children's identity. This is the method for identifying a piece of information from two or more different (often unrelated) sources where the information's release was not intentional.
- Peoples home addresses are not posted.
- If anyone replies or posts on any Parish social media account and indicates that they are at risk of harm or if someone appears to be at risk, this must be reported immediately to the Local Safeguarding Representative or another trusted authority in the parish/entity. If it is believed that they may be in/or at risk of immediate harm, this must be reported immediately to the Police dialling 111 and subsequently to the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer.

In additions to the 'minimum requirements' consider displaying:

- A link to the parish safeguarding policy
  Documents & Policies - National Office for Professional Standards (catholic.org.nz)
- A link to the safeguarding diocesan website   www.cdocsafeguarding.nz
- A link to the Catholic Social Services   www.catholicsocialservices.nz
- National Helplines are available on the cdocsafegaurding.nz website e.g..

    1. Police: Links to other helping agencies | New Zealand Police
    2. Stop Programme   A community free from sexual harm | Stop
    3. Safe to talk: Sexual Harm. Do you want to talk? | Safe to talk
    4. Oranga Tamariki: Oranga Tamariki — Ministry for Children
    5. Need to talk?:   1737 - Need to Talk?

BRIEF GUIDE TO SOCIAL MEDIA FOR PARISHES AND CATHOLIC ENTITIES

The Church is called to harness the good of social media, being faithful witnesses in the content we share and, in the ways, we use digital technology.

Social Media is the number one internet destination for millions of New Zealanders. In 2023, 96% of the NZ population are active internet users.

Some FACTS to know in reaching out through social media platforms:

- In 2023, an estimated 4.9 billion people use social media across the world.
- The number of social media users worldwide has swelled to a record 4.9 billion people globally. What's more, this number is expected to jump to approximately 5.85 billion users by 2027.
- Most users are not tied to a single platform. The average user now spreads their digital footprint across a staggering six to seven platforms every month—highlighting the need for a multi-platform approach to social media marketing.
- Approx 80% of all men and women who use the internet are on Facebook.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?……………………..YOU ARE!!!!!!!!!

All contents and/or posts on a Parish site remain the responsibility of the Parish Priest or Entity Leader. Therefore, if administrative rights have been delegated to a third party, a protocol must be agreed.

Form a social media team, minimum two people: One individual should not be relied on to have oversight of the social media presence of the parish. Parishes and Catholic Entities need to ensure that there is some form of oversight from a group of people and the parish priest to prevent conflicting messages.

Administrators and Moderators will need to manage content and risk: The Administrator is the person who sets up the account. Moderators need to be chosen carefully – they should be calm, impartial, and mature enough to treat everyone with respect, and strike a balance between allowing free discussion while also ensuring discussion and comments do not get out of hand.

Given how quickly arguments and criticism can get out of hand, it's best to have as many moderators as you can trust, ideally people who are digitally engaged. While social media provides a new avenue for previously unengaged parishioners to communicate with you, there are risks:

- People may publicly argue via the comments section of your page or group. Resolving disagreements via writing online, rather than face to face or phone calls, is generally difficult and can create awkward or even acrimonious feeling between more opinionated parishioners.
- Your page or group may be "trolled" - whereby strangers write negative, even nasty comments on your public posts. This may follow negative stories about the Catholic Church as a whole, all the way down to simple personal disputes.
- As with any publication, there is a small chance of legal risk – for example, if someone is defamatory within your group.

- Resolving these risks is up to the delegated Administrator/s of the page or Moderator/s who the admin appoints. These people have the power to remove or even ban users from a page, as well as prevent further comments on a post or page.

Decide on your decision-making process: agree on how you will make decisions within your social media team e.g., via email, a group Facebook Messenger/WhatsApp/SMS chat.

Decide on what the approval process for each 'post': Is your Parish priest digitally active enough to approve each post, or will he need to allow some discretion by other team members to approve post?

Resolve to be conversational: Its crucial to understand social media is inherently conversational, so the formal tone we inherently use when writing official materials will be a turnoff to your audience, regardless of age. Write as you would say it in real life.

FACEBOOK

Facebook pages Facebook's version of a brochure and newsletter, Pages are you "official" and public presence. People follow them by "Liking" a page – essentially a free subscription. Any member of the public can do so and see all comments and posts within, which gives them unique advantages and drawbacks.

Advantages of Pages

- Makes it easy for new people to "discover" your parish. You can link to your Facebook page from emails, messages etc knowing people can instantly see all the (hopefully appealing) content that is on them and follow the Pages easily.
- You can post content that your happy to be public.
- Examples of good Facebook Page content:
    1. Updates about changes in Mass times and other public information.
    2. Photos and videos (including live streams of Mass) of your services.
    3. Photos and videos of those parishioners and public representatives such as priests who are happy to be seen by the public.
    4. Links to your official Parish websites.
    5. Facebook Events that are open to the public, such as Christmas and Easter services, first Holy Communion dates etc.

Disadvantages of Pages:

- They are public, not private: any photos you put up will be viewable by anoone who"Likes" your page. You have no control over who can "Like" your page and thus anyone can see what is on it, which makes it more open and easier to discover then Groups, but you may want to avoid putting more intimate content on it e.g. photos of families, children etc.
- Not very visible unless people go looking for the Page: while Pages show up in Facebook search, which is a big way people find things on Facebook, they are not prominent in people's feeds unless you pay for them to be "boosted".

Facebook: Live - Video has always been one of the most compelling forms of content on the internet.

- Mass online – Masses lend themselves well to live streaming because they are at a set time that all parishioners know, so its easy for people to remember when they are being broadcast. Publicise it via your newsletters and social media.

How to get parishioners to use your Facebook Page or Group

- Advertise your social media accounts regularly and how to find your site.
- Always use photos or even videos, not just text, as they stand out far more in a social media feed.
- Post frequently to grow your Facebook audience. Facebook Page is more like a public brochure, Facebook Groups are where people connect more deeply.

INSTAGRAM

- Audience
- 1+ billion users
- 80% are teens
- Skewed towards youth, 65% of under 30 use Instagram.

Advantages

- Heavily image based, which are easier and quicker to share than a written post.
- Extremely positive culture, with limited conversation-thus limiting risk of acrimonious arguments and debates.

Disadvantages

- Focus on imagery means it's not good for detailed discussion or sharing information such as links to articles.
- While very popular among the youth, Facebook is still utilised much more by older parishioners.

Some Other Social Media Platforms:

- **LinkedIn**: basically, Facebook for professionals. Minimal value in Linked in for parishes given it primarily geared towards job searches and corporate and economic matters.
- **Snapchat**: Popular platform with teenagers and young adults. Posts are all temporary. Discern if this is an appropriate platform for your parish/community.
- **WhatsApp**: popular, secure, private chat/messaging platform. Useful for smaller groups who need to communicate with more immediacy, i.e. groups or committees.

Percentage of each age group that uses at least one social media site
Source: PewResearch

Age group	Percentage
18-29	84%
30-49	81%
50-64	73%
65+	45%

Source: Forbes Advisor • Embed

Forbes ADVISOR