

Cheadle Hulme United Reformed Church

Policy for use of SOCIAL & ONLINE MEDIA: 2026



Social media such as Facebook, 'X' (Twitter), WhatsApp, blogs and websites are extremely useful tools for communicating widely about our church and our faith to the public, supporters, the media and the world at large.

When anyone places a comment or sentence in a place which others can see /hear/ read, it is called publishing. However, once published information is immediately in the public domain and liable to be taken as fact or as the official policy of this church or even the URC. This means that we need to make sure that we get it right. We should never publish any information which could potentially distress members or the wider church or present us unfavourably to the world. Published material may then be copied anywhere in the world, **probably** before it can be retracted, if retraction is actually possible. Remember, too that people of other cultures may see far reaching interpretations or twists in otherwise innocent or unguarded comments.

Before you publish any information, consider:

- Is it true fact, and is the information of interest to the public?
- Is it opinion? At least make it clear.
- Does the way in which the information is presented portray the church as a professional and committed organisation?
- Is publishing in the best interests our church, the wider church, or even Christianity?

To ensure that we don't run foul of this and publish information guilty of any of this...

- Do not publish anything that is personal information, where individuals can be identified. A press release can be agreed that is both factual and proof-read (containing no spelling, grammatical or formatting mistakes). This can then be published on the website or the Facebook page and it is this version that can be copied, syndicated (re...Tweeted) to social media such as Twitter and WhatsApp. It does not matter if this is published an hour or even a day later; it is better to be late and right than prompt and wrong.
- ALL information needs to be passed by a single central figure, say, the Secretary.
- On member's personal media sites, there should be no criticism made of this or other organisations, either directly or implied. It is not our place to make any situation worse. As a rule, if you are unsure and have to think, then it probably isn't.
- Think carefully before posting on other websites or forums. Your comments will reflect upon the church even if you say it's just your opinion.
- Be careful not to get into a chat or texting exchange where one can be carried away, leading to loss of context; losing the plot or forgetting the world is watching.
- The church's website and FaceBook (FB) pages are not personal sites. If you have a social media site /blog and are used to publishing information about what we're up to, joking with our friends etc – this is not appropriate for church communications. It can be informal or light-hearted chat about the church, but it needs to be professional. See comments above.
- The church's website is a formal presentation, whilst the FB site may be a less formal forum, though thought should still be given before posting, even about yourself.

Elders must review this policy regularly.

Bernie Stevens 4/9/2026

Note on CH URC Official publications

The CH URC publishes a Website, a Facebook page and a Twitter account (and a hard copy Newsletter often e-mailed out) and though they are controlled by officers of the church, are not exempt from the general policy set out above.

The website is seen as an official reference point for information that doesn't change frequently. It contains links to FaceBook and Twitter and several years archive of the newsletter. See... www.cheadlehulmeurc.org.uk

The Facebook page however is a recent attempt to reach out to the community and use the medium and language all around us with topical news and comment.

The 'X' (Twitter) account is relatively inactive at present, being the joint site for the former Bramhall and Cheadle Hulme Pastorate, so merely acting as a station keeper and pointer to the webpage and FaceBook sites.

The magazine or newsletter is our attempt at a traditional church instrument to keep in touch with our own flock: it is hard printed & often e-mailed as an online PDF file.

Bernie Stevens 4//9/2026

STYLE GUIDELINES for Internet and Print publications

- Every book, magazine and newsletter has a 'house style', an ethos, a personality - its 'rules'.
- Every writer has a style, in syntax, structure, vocabulary and punctuation and this is to be applauded, even welcomed. Think Shakespeare!

BUT...

- Consider the reader. Emphasis is often useful to punch home a point or draw attention in a long monologue, BUT...
 - A little style goes a long waaay!!!!!! *But too much looks tacky or unprofessional.*
 - Do not use exclamation marks (!) unless it's truly surprising. And just one please.
 - **Use of bold or colours or UPPER CASE in the hope that they will stand out must be employed *carefully* or exceptionally.** It may just look messy(!?!?)
 - Equally only one of the following is needed at the end of a sentence: colon, semi-colon, question mark, **exclamation mark or period(...)**
- Use of a logo should be restricted to an appropriate quality image (the URC national website has electronic versions available in a variety of sizes and qualities) and only used on the websites and social media listed below. If a new opportunity for social media appears, it should not be used without first agreeing with the secretary.
- Try not to use acronyms and jargon without explanation. If you are going to shorten a word to an acronym, write it in full with the acronym in brackets the first time that it appears in the text, before using the acronym thereafter.
- Make sure that it's professional and easy to read. Get someone else to check your work. No one should ever proof-read their own work as it's so hard to see your own mistakes.
- Just because you understand it, doesn't mean that anyone else will.
- Your views may not be understood or even welcomed by some others.
- Pass everything by another eg secretary for support.