



STREET PASTORS

Social Media



Social Media Guidelines for Street Pastors Initiatives

1 Introduction

Billions of people are connecting on social media every day. Facebook has 1.49 billion active users each month (July 2015 figures). 500 million tweets are sent every day. Social media offers an unparalleled opportunity to connect with people and build relationships with those we might otherwise struggle to reach. Many churches are active in using social media to deepen relationships with their congregations, local services and influencers, and to reach out into their communities.

Is social media a good thing for Street Pastors Initiatives?

Yes. Ascension Trust has drawn up these guidelines to help local schemes to be part of conversations on social media and develop their presence online.

Our primary message to Street Pastors Initiatives (SPIs) is please engage with your audience of supporters, donors, sceptics, fan and beneficiaries through social media ... and please do so responsibly in line with terms of the licence agreement and the Street Pastors Code of Conduct.

Whether you already have social media accounts or not please read carefully through these documents. In particular, document 4 *Policy* and document 2, *Setting up*. A number of SPIs have set up Twitter and Facebook accounts that do not comply with our guidelines in terms of **type** of account or account **username**. There are also some **safeguarding** issues that we would like to address.

Ascension Trust encourages the strengthening of your local identity through your online presence. However, we also ask that all SPIs consider how as a united network we need to guard against confusion so that our shared reputation is protected.

1.1 Protecting our reputation

The local SPI must take reasonable steps to ensure as far as possible that no person or persons associated with the local SPI brings Ascension Trust, the Street Pastors movement or related projects into disrepute as a result of statements made on Facebook, Twitter or any other social networking site.

1.2 Current number of Facebook accounts/Twitter accounts

108 (approx) areas have a Facebook account (not all may be active). 96 (approx) areas have a Twitter account (not all may be active).

1.3 How can we use social media to our advantage?

As more and more SPIs make use of the ability to reach their audience with social media, so the Street Pastors brand will be strengthened. Our vision for communications in the national SPI network is that by making best use of local scheme subdomain websites and social media, we will:

- develop a sense of family, belonging and shared aims for coordinators, trustees and volunteers;
- enable organisation-wide conversations to take place (as we learn from each other or share news from other areas);
- demonstrate our values and expertise;
- interact with important stakeholders, e.g. funders, individual donors, the Police, churches and other service providers;

- raise our profile – among the faith community, the voluntary sector and other agencies that work in the night-time economy – so that together we can continue to mobilise Christians and churches and be a mouthpiece for the Church in action.

Join in! Follow, like and share! 

2 Setting up

Growing your presence online will work best if the responsibility can be carried by someone who enjoys social media and already has some experience of communicating this way. In most cases this role will fall to the coordinator, but another suitable volunteer may come forward.

Clearly, this person must be trustworthy and have a good knowledge of the aims and activities of the local SPI, as well as a good level of literacy and the ability to develop a friendly but professional tone of voice.

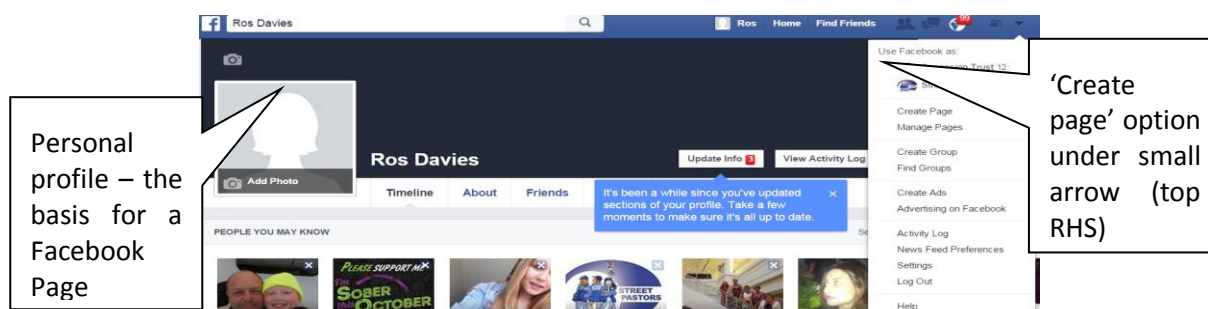
A person who has access to the account (via login details) and permission to post or delete/schedule/hide posts is called an administrator.

2.1 Administrators

It is very important that the administrator role is shared by at least two people. Please see document 4, *Policy*. Please also follow the guidelines below.

2.2 Facebook

- Please make sure that you set up a PAGE rather than a personal profile. A Facebook page is more transparent, anyone can post onto your timeline (if you activate this setting) and anyone can choose to 'like' the page.
- A Page has to be set up from a personal profile, and you will see the option to 'Create Page' under the Settings tab. This personal profile can be an existing one or you can create a new one and then lock it down so that it is not used.



2.3 Twitter

There are no variations on the type of account that you can open with Twitter, so this is straightforward. In terms of choosing a name for your account, you have to create two 'names':

1. A username – this appears in your profile URL and is unique to you. You will use it for logging in and others will use it if they want to mention you on Twitter, send a reply to you or a direct message.

2. Your real name – this name is your personal identifier (it should be as close as possible to the name of your team). It is displayed on your profile page and is used to identify you to friends, especially important if your username is something other than your name or organisation name.

Have a look at these examples:

@Luton_St_Pastor [username] Luton Street Pastors [real name]

@StreetPastorsRG [username] Reading Street Pastors [real name]

Sometimes it can be difficult to get the best version of both of these names because of Twitter's character limits. The username is restricted to 15 characters and the real name is restricted to 20 characters.

The national page uses @StreetPastors [username] and Street Pastors [real name].

We would prefer SPIs to follow the format of the two examples above – in which the local area is clearly identified in the real name and the user name. If an area uses 'Street Pastors' as its username or real name (without a local identifying name, even if abbreviated) its account will be confused with the national accounts.

2.4 Cover images and profile images



Please choose an appropriate image for your cover image (see section 4.4 on photography). Your profile image should be the customised Street Pastors logo (the standard SP logo is given to all areas with a white band in which you can add your area name). Both Twitter and Facebook use the same terminology here:

Cover image = the full-width banner at the top of your page.

Profile image = the small square in the left hand corner of your cover image.

Facebook will offer you several options for a strapline about your organisational status, e.g. Church/Religious Organization, Community Organization, Non-profit Organization. Please choose as you prefer.

2.5 Facebook variations

Some SPIs have set up a Facebook 'Group' – either Public or Closed – and participants have to be invited or approved by the administrator. A closed group may assist the coordinator with communication around the team.

A Page that is open to all is obviously the only way you will be able to be found online by your stakeholders, partners and members of the public. It may also be an important way for people to get in touch with you and it gives you the ability to present yourselves and your messages to everyone.

Ascension Trust would prefer to see SPIs with a public-facing online presence with the majority of your social media activity taking place on a Facebook Page.

2.6 Tone

You should always aim to be respectful and courteous to those you engage with online.

In practice we expect this to mean: no use of jargon, colloquialisms, slang, idiosyncrasies, street talk, foul expressions, coarse language, political innuendos or any other insinuation that may communicate anything other than wholesome content or language.

Colossians 4:6 *'Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.'*

Join in! Follow, like and share! 

3 What to post (and what not to post)

You should assume that anything you post online is permanent. Even if you delete it shortly afterwards, it may have been copied and published elsewhere. Always think carefully before posting and follow the guidelines for appropriate language in document 4, *Policy*.

Photos work very well on social media, but please see guidance in section 4.4.

If you are unsure what to post, follow the menu on your own subdomain website or follow the national website menu structure. This gives you some ready-made categories of information:

About: who you are

Our services: what you do

Volunteering: join us as a volunteer/the role of a street pastor

Activities: what's happening/news/diary of events

Why Street Pastors? the value and impact of what you do

National picture: your place in a larger network/sharing news from other local schemes

3.1 Other ideas for good content

- Starting up a new scheme
- Older people volunteering
- Cold weather endurance!
- Tackling drinking/drugs issues/crime – how do you make a difference?
- Local community leaders/MPs accompanying your teams
- Events that you will be part of
- In-house events: prayer, fundraising, socials, training

- Landmarks: commissioning, celebrations, anniversaries
- Feedback: from Police, parents, young people
- Shared posts from other areas or from the fantastic source of news that is the national website and/or Facebook page!

3.2 Topics to abstain from

- Internal disagreements
- Theology or theological differences
- An injury to a street pastor
- When something happens that shouldn't have happened/a misdemeanour
- A discussion that might lead to your team being drawn into controversy
- References to note-taking/record keeping, i.e. numbers of people injured/numbers of spiritual conversations/number of times that First Aid was administered. Save these for monthly reports, newsletters and presentations
- Too much personal information or use of names

3.3 Anonymity

One of the challenges of social media is finding the right tone of voice (see section 2.6). It is important to find a way of being creative *and* careful; personable *and* professional. Sometimes a personal story is a tempting way to make an impact, but this needs to be done with care. Ascension Trust recommends that names of people that you meet are not used. 'Our friend' is a safe way to avoid potential pitfalls.

Please have a look at this 'Before' and 'After' example.

Before (The area name has been removed for the purposes of this guide; it was present in the original post)

"Beautiful People", Humbling Encounter

The nicest encounter we had was with a young lady from the north of the country who was out with a friend in XXXX. She has just been rejected by an employer for a job that she had worked very hard to get. She was taken into care from age fifteen and her mother doesn't want to know her. She did meet her father last year but said she is very lonely. She was such a warm person and was very friendly to us. She called us "beautiful people"! We encouraged her to visit our churches and left her with a smile and a "You've been Street Pastored" card. Please pray for her.

After

Thank you to the warm, friendly person we met on Fri/Sat who called us "Beautiful people". She told us of the struggles she is going through. We encouraged her to visit our churches and left her with a smile and a "You've been Street Pastored" card. Please pray for her.

The key points here:

- The original post mentioned gender, location and personal information.
- Another 'client/beneficiary' might see this and think that their story might be broadcast in this way too. That does not build trust
- The revised post is guarded but still conveys the warmth of the encounter and the way in which the support of street pastors was needed but it does not give information that might make it possible for the person to be identified.



Join in! Follow, like, share!

4 Responsible use: A policy

The following policies provide coordinators and management teams with common-sense guidelines and recommendations for using social media responsibly and safely.

Wherever the Street Pastors logo appears or wherever pictures of uniformed street pastors appear, you are speaking for the organisation. Therefore – whether you are speaking in an official capacity or a private capacity – you must take all necessary care to not bring the Street Pastors movement into disrepute according to the terms of the Street Pastors licence, agreement and Code of Conduct.

In order to protect and steward the reputation of Street Pastors and Ascension Trust, volunteers and coordinators must not:

- post disparaging or defamatory statements about Ascension Trust, its staff, volunteers or trustees, any clients, partners or stakeholders;
- post disparaging or defamatory statements about your own local partners (e.g. churches, businesses or police officers);
- post disparaging or defamatory statements about another SPI;
- post social media communications that might be misconstrued in a way that could damage the reputation of the Street Pastors network or Ascension Trust, even indirectly;
- post comments about sensitive topics, such as Christian theology, practice or disagreements (even if you make it clear that your views on such topics do not represent those of the organisation, your comments could still impact the reputation of Street Pastors);
- infringe the intellectual property of other companies and individuals.
- use inappropriate language, for example, jargon, colloquialisms, slang, idiosyncrasies, street talk, foul expressions, coarse language, political innuendos or any other insinuation that may communicate anything other than wholesome content or language.

4.1 Administrators

The administrator role must be shared by at least two people. The account must not be under the control of one person alone, as in the case of illness or death, holidays or in the event of a conflict/grudge, access to the account could be lost without the ability for someone else to regain control.

4.2 Anonymity of volunteers

You are likely to be in possession of confidential information about your volunteers, and this starts with basic information about names and rotas.

The only place where you can name volunteers (for example, 'The team out tonight is ...') is in a closed Facebook group. Volunteers must not be named on other public social media channels as this is a safeguarding issue. Please guard their privacy.

The importance of anonymity in a wider context is covered in section 3.3.

4.3 Sources

Please acknowledge your sources, i.e. when quoting from another publication (online or print).

4.4 Photos

4.4.1 Photos of volunteers

Please establish a policy for the use of photographs of your volunteers in action as street pastors, and make sure that you only use photos of those who have given permission for their photos to be used.

4.4.2 Photos of the general public

In general, you must avoid taking or sharing photos in which a member of the public will be identifiable.

It is quite common that a team on patrol will be asked to join in a photo with members of the public, but street pastors should not take their own shots of the group and post them on social media or their website – in the cold light of day many members of the public might regret being pictured and associated with street pastors, and we can avoid any potential recriminations by not taking or sharing such photos.

If you need to gather a small photo library for presentations and/or your website please follow the guidelines below:

- the safest approach is to take photos from behind a member of the public, so that only the faces of your team are visible (if you have team members' permission for this);
- do not post images of babies or children, unless their faces are obscured or they have their back to the camera.
- try to capture your photos in one go, rather than taking a camera with you on every patrol. The primary role of a street pastor is to care for others not to pose for photos.

4.4.3 Professional photos

You may be given access to a photo library or be able to use the work of a professional/semi-professional photographer. Always ask how the photographer would like to be credited and make sure that you acknowledge the source of the photos wherever they are used (this is difficult to do on social media, so it may be necessary to discuss separately the use of the photos on social media).

4.5 Safeguarding

Remember that the law and the safeguarding policy of Ascension Trust applies in your communications with children and young people. You should not exchange private messages with young people via social media.

4.6 Re-tweeting

Re-tweet with care: a significant portion of activity on Twitter involves re-using a message that someone else has posted and sending it (unchanged) to your followers. Re-tweeting can be seen as an endorsement of the message and/or the sender, so you need to make sure that the source is trusted and that there will be no hidden surprises if you associate your SPI with that person or group.

4.7 Dealing with unwanted or inappropriate posts

In the event that you find an unwanted or inappropriate post on your timeline:

4.7.1 Facebook

In most cases, using Facebook's option to 'hide' the post will be sufficient – this means that you are taking control of what appears on your page, but you are allowing the person who posted the message to have their say. Facebook says the following in relation to this:

What's the difference between deleting a story and hiding a story from my Timeline?

Deleting stories: Deleting a story will remove it from your Timeline and from Facebook. You have the option to delete the things you post on Facebook.

Hiding stories: Hiding a story will remove it from your Timeline, but it won't delete that story from Facebook. This means stories you hide are still visible to the audience they were shared with other places on Facebook (ex: in search or News Feed).

Critical or unfriendly messages may occasionally appear in your timeline, in a comment or via a direct message. In this case, follow the advice below.

4.7.2 Twitter

It is always best to acknowledge an inappropriate message politely rather than to ignore it. Be brief (as you will have to be on Twitter anyway) so that you do not add any more grist to the mill.



All queries to be directed to the Legal & Policy desk at Ascension Trust by email: legal@ascensiontrust.org.uk