



Taunton Baptist Church

Information Technology Policy

This policy addresses the use of Information Technology (IT) on Taunton Baptist Church (TBC) premises and also remotely (e.g. Church web site and social media sites). It is specifically designed to protect all users, particularly children and adults at risk, but is good practice for all.



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1. Church IT Equipment

- 1.1 Taunton Baptist Church (TBC) owns a range of information technology devices and facilities which are for the use of church staff and church members according to their requirements. Additionally, certain installations provide security for the building and the activities within it. The Administrator will hold an inventory of these devices, all of which may be subject to audit at any point in time with the approval of the Trustees. The current inventory is as follows:
- Desktop or laptop PCs – sited in the offices of staff members and in the Sanctuary
 - Smartphones – issued to those members of staff who request them
 - A site-wide wi-fi network – offering access to the Internet. It comprises two SSIDs: TBC-Member, which is password-protected; and TBC-Guest, which is open-access
 - A smart TV – sited in the Trull/Corfe Room, with access to internet-based services, such as YouTube
 - Internal CCTV – eight cameras sited strategically throughout the building. A central control unit (with monitoring point) is in the church office. Remote monitoring permissions are currently granted to the Administrator and one Trustee
 - External CCTV – five cameras overlooking the car park to the rear of the building. A central control unit (with monitoring point) is in the church office. Remote monitoring permissions are currently granted to the Administrator and one Trustee
- 1.2 Various measures are (and will be) taken to ensure the security and proper use of these devices, as well as to provide safeguarding for each user, and the protection of any personal information stored about church members/contacts. These include:
- Configuring the devices, where possible, for the automatic downloading and applying of security update patches and antivirus software
 - Occasional monitoring by the Administrator and/or one Trustee to ensure compliance with the policy, as well as issuing periodic reminders or updates about the policy (following its regular review by the Trustees)
 - Withdrawal of access to devices or facilities for wilful, low-level non-compliance
 - Disciplinary procedures, up to and including immediate termination of employment / Church membership for more serious violation of these policies by the ministers, officers, employees, volunteers or members of the church

2. Handling Sensitive Personal Information (SPI)

- 2.1 SPI is defined as: *personal data which consists of information concerning a person's racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious beliefs or beliefs of a similar nature, membership of a Trade Union, physical or mental health condition, sexual life, commission or alleged commission of any offence, a record of any proceedings for any offence committed or alleged, or a record of any sentence or proceedings.* TBC is likely to process sensitive personal information as religious belief is classed as 'sensitive'.



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- 2.2 Users must consult the TBC Data Protection policy if they need to record, store or share SPI.
- 2.3 Users must not store SPI on personally owned devices, even if used for church business.

3. Appropriate use of the Internet

- 3.1 Access to the Internet using TBC's wired or wireless facilities is provided so as to support the mission and ministry of the Church, and it is expected that all users should deploy good judgment, common sense and careful discretion when online. Specifically, TBC requires users to respect the following in this regard:
 - Limit use to appropriate Church use only; access for more than minor personal use is prohibited
 - Do not send junk email, spam or any other unsolicited messages
 - Do not attempt to gain unauthorized access to remote systems
 - Do not perpetrate any form of fraud, or software or music piracy
 - Do not participate in any form of online gambling
 - Do not undertake any activities for commercial or personal gain
 - Do not knowingly access Internet sites that contain obscene, racist, hateful, terrorism, militant or pornographic material
 - Do not knowingly make available or upload files containing a virus, worm or corrupt data that may damage the operation of any computer or property of another
 - Do not impersonate any person or entity for the purpose of misleading others
 - Do not attempt to bypass the security settings or use the Internet Service in a manner that may damage or disable its functionality

4. TBC website (tauntonbaptist.org)

- 4.1 TBC runs a website (tauntonbaptist.org) and appoints a webmaster to manage its content (webmaster@tauntonbaptist.org) whose responsibility is to maintain the site in line with the aims of the church and within the terms of the IT policy (e.g. adhering to the guidelines for posting content online, below).
- 4.2 The webmaster allows the Administrator and various group leaders to update pages within the site, liaising with them to ensure suitability of content.
- 4.3 The webmaster provides occasional reports to the Trustees and the church, informing them of the website's status and responding to requests for development.



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5 Posting content online (social media)

5.1 TBC has an additional presence online via its YouTube channel and its Facebook and Instagram accounts. Content posted here is a significant part of its public identity, and so the Church expects those responsible to exercise good judgment and common sense in regard to content, to ensure, for example, that the Church or specific individuals are not harmed or brought into disrepute.

5.2 The following list, without being exhaustive, illustrates conduct to be avoided:

- Do not post, publish, distribute or disseminate material or information that is offensive, defamatory, obscene, indecent, threatening, abusive, harassing or unlawful
- Do not post, publish, distribute or disseminate material or information that incites discrimination, hate or violence towards any person or group on account of their race, religion, sexual orientation, gender, disability, nationality or otherwise
- Do not infringe any copyright, trademark, patent or other proprietary right of any other party through the download or use of any information or material

5.3 Those posting on social media platforms where children (under 18s) are involved should note the following guidelines:

- Set up a church group account to communicate with young people (under 18) rather than using private individual social media accounts
- Personal user account holders should not accept "Friend" requests from under 18s in their care
- Set up and communicate with young people through a closed group, to avoid direct messaging and to keep all content outside the public domain
- Assign one or more group leaders (18+) to act as administrator for the group taking responsibility for approving new members and content
- Post all information (news, events, information or reminders) on the wall/group space to avoiding the use of one-to-one private/inbox messages
- Keep up to date with social media channel policies (age, privacy settings etc.) and adhere to them. For example, at present, Facebook requires all users to be over the age of 13 years
- The administrator(s) should be responsible for the addition of photographs ensuring that permission has been given for their use and that no picture is tagged or used as a personal profile picture (see *TBC Safeguarding policy*)

6 Posting content online (private accounts)

6.1 TBC acknowledges that it cannot exercise control over what its members post as private individuals.



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- 6.2 The Trustees ask, however, that members take care not to post content which might cause harm to (or bring into disrepute) other Church members or the Church as a whole.
- 6.3 Specifically, the Trustees ask all group leaders (paid and voluntary) to take care that their private social media accounts reflect the values and ethos of the Church.

7. General guidelines for conduct online

- 7.1 The following guidelines aim to be a useful reminder of good etiquette online:
- *Promote integrity* – electronic communications should be consistent with the teaching of scripture and the values of TBC. Nothing should be written online that would not be said in person as a representative of the church. If a public dialogue gets heated, it is best to stop using a public forum and make the conversation private. Leaders are expected to have the foresight to anticipate, within reason, how their words and/or actions may be perceived by their audience and to those under their care. It is highly recommended that any potentially difficult posting should be reviewed by the church officers.
 - *Promote credibility* – facts should be checked to ensure they are correct; in proper context and that positions are justifiable. Response to those who disagree should be in a spirit of love and grace. Electronic communications should not be used to resolve interpersonal conflicts that are best handled face-to-face. It is highly recommended that any potentially difficult posting should be reviewed by the church officers.
 - *Maintain confidentiality* – communications should not inadvertently share confidential information (churches deal with a lot of confidences so extra care must be taken with this). With any public postings the author is legally liable for what is written. Laws governing slander, libel, defamation and copyright apply. Outside parties can pursue legal action against individuals for postings.
 - *Avoid political posting* – as part of TBC's status as a faith-based charity it cannot be seen to endorse or support a political candidate or party. Any public posting on a political issue which is made on behalf of the church must be agreed by the church officers. It is recognised that Church ministers may wish to speak in their own right on political issues when posting personal blogs, Facebook postings, tweets etc., but they should make it clear that this is their own view and not necessarily the view of the church and church IT platforms should not be used in these cases.
 - *Show respect* – since electronic communications are public (or easily made public), everyone associated with the church should be respectful to the church and leaders, employees, volunteers and members. Any employee or member who uses electronic communications to disparage the name or reputation of the church, its practices, or its ministers, officers, employees, volunteers or members will be subject to discipline, up to and including immediate termination of employment / Church membership.



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- *Avoid misunderstandings* – written words can easily convey the wrong message as the “non-verbal” channels that accompany face-to-face communication (body language, facial expressions and tone of voice) are absent. Reread everything prior to sending to ensure there is no possibility of misunderstanding. Too many relational problems are brought on by poor word choices or communications sent in anger/haste. Remember the motto: “Think before you press send”.

Agreement to abide by this policy

To be signed by all Trustees and those

- (i) who use Church IT equipment
- (ii) who post church content online
- (iii) group leaders who wish to use the wi-fi.

Signed: _____

Date: _____