DIOCESE of **WINCHESTER**

TEN THINGS TO REMEMBER WHEN USING SOCIAL MEDIA
Ten Top Tips for your Church Community

1. **Think before you post because what you say online is public and permanent**
   As with writing a letter or an email, think carefully about what you want to say and how you want to say it. Never post anything that you know to be libellous, false or offensive.

2. **Anything you put online is in the public domain**
   Sharing your beliefs and opinions with friends using social media might feel private, but if more than one person can access what you have written it is likely that the law would regard it as published and therefore subject the laws of libel, slander, copyright, Freedom of Information and data protection.

3. **Safeguarding**
   Communicating with children, young adults and the vulnerable is a very important consideration. Safeguarding policies apply just as much in the context of communication as with face-to-face meetings. You should avoid exchanging private or personal messages with young or vulnerable people via social media, or indeed any other form of media, and should not accept 'friend requests' from young or vulnerable people. Remember the largest age group using social media are those from 16 – 25.

4. **Electronic security is something of a misnomer**
   You might be able to delete or recall an email but there's no guarantee your recipient will also. Although your 'privacy settings' mean that only your accepted 'friends' (on Facebook) or 'followers' (on Twitter) can see the things you post or send, there is no way of preventing them being posted somewhere else in your name.

5. **Confidentiality**
   Don't let social media distort your view of what is private and what is public. Confidential and private matters, especially in the context of the Church and its faithful, must stay private.

6. **The distinction between public and private is not always obvious**
   Any controversial or insensitive comments you make may attract the unwanted attention of the media. A golden rule for this is to ask yourself the question – would I write this in the parish newsletter, magazine or email? If the answer is no then ere on the side of caution and don't publish it online. If in doubt you can always take advice from the Diocesan Communication Team (please see below) or a trusted colleague. However, please remember that you are ultimately responsible for your own online activities.

7. **Security is just as important when using social media, as it is with written records**
   Be very careful about the personal details you – both your own and other peoples. Again remember that anything you share about yourself is in the public domain. Be very wary about publish your address, personal contact or bank/building society details online.

8. **Don't let social media take over your life**

It can and does become a spoilt child if you give it too much attention; it can take over and leave you less time for more important things – including communicating with people in real life. Remember, there's no substitute for a catch up over tea and biscuits or a friendly phone call.

9. Don't let social media become your only form of communication
    Social media is a useful and easy forum for communicating and contacting people online but it is sometimes best used alongside more conventional forms of communication e.g. parish newsletters. Remember not everyone feels comfortable with using social media and others do not have easy access to a computer.

10. Always let common sense prevail when communicating with people known or unknown, on the internet in general and social media in particular.