

### 1. Reflect the Values of the Methodist Church

Your online presence allows you to shape how others see your church. Reflecting Methodist values ensures a positive, authentic image, strengthens outreach, and invites others into your church community.

The calling of the Methodist Church is to respond to the gospel of God's love in Christ and to live out its discipleship in worship and mission.

The Church exists to:

- Increase the awareness of God's presence and celebrate God's love (Worship).
- Help people to grow and learn as Christians, through mutual support and care (Learning and Caring).
- Be a good neighbour to everyone and in particular to people in need and to challenge injustice (Service).
- Make more followers of Jesus Christ (Evangelism).

### 2. Report Concerns Immediately

The safety and wellbeing of everyone and in particular children, young people and vulnerable adults, must always be maintained in all digital activities undertaken on behalf of the church.

If you see, receive, or become aware of anything online that causes concern, including inappropriate messages, comments, images, videos, behaviour, or disclosures made through social media, email or messaging platforms, you must report this immediately. Concerns should be raised with the relevant Church Safeguarding Officer (local church, circuit or regional as appropriate). If you are unsure who this is, or if the concern involves that person, follow the Methodist Church safeguarding reporting procedures. Contact details can be found here:

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/safeguarding/safeguarding-contacts/>

### 3. Consent to Record Online Meetings and Worship

Always obtain clear, informed consent before recording any online meeting or act of worship on platforms such as Zoom. Participants should be notified in advance, ideally in the meeting invitation and again at the start of the meeting that recording will take place.

You should clearly explain why the recording is being made, how it will be used, and where it will be shared (for example, church website, social media, or internal use only).

Participants should be given the opportunity to opt out, such as by turning off their camera or not contributing verbally. Recording should not begin until this information has been shared and consent understood.

 The **Methodist Church**

The calling of the Methodist Church is to respond to the gospel of God's love in Christ and to live out its discipleship in worship and mission



Before publishing or sharing any recording, take time to review it carefully. Be mindful of visible names, faces, and any sensitive or personal information that may appear. Consider whether everyone included would reasonably expect to be featured in the final version.

Remember that once content is shared online, it can be copied or screen-recorded by others. This means extra care should be taken to protect privacy and avoid unintentionally disclosing personal information.

#### **4. Managing Backgrounds / Environment**

Care should be taken to ensure that no personal, confidential or identifying information is visible in the background during online meetings or worship. This includes documents, addresses, photographs, or other private materials.

Particular attention should be given to children and young people, who may unintentionally enter the camera frame if others are joining from home environments.

Participants should be encouraged to use neutral, blurred or virtual backgrounds where possible, and to position cameras carefully to protect privacy and maintain a safe and appropriate environment.

#### **5. Meeting Security**

Online meetings must be set up with appropriate security and access controls in place. Joining links should be shared privately (for example via email or closed groups) and never posted on public websites or social media.

Features such as waiting rooms should be enabled so that hosts can control who is admitted, and meetings should be locked once all expected participants have joined where appropriate. These measures help prevent unauthorised access, reduce the risk of disruption, and create a safer environment for all participants.

Hosts should also review and manage platform security settings carefully. This includes controlling whether participants can change their display names, save chat messages, share their screens, or start recordings. Restricting these features where appropriate can help maintain privacy, prevent misuse and ensure the meeting remains a safe and respectful space for everyone.

#### **6. Hosting and Moderation**

Online meetings should always have a designated host and co-host who are responsible for the safe and effective running of the session.

Their role includes monitoring participant behaviour, moderating chat functions, admitting attendees from waiting rooms, and responding appropriately to any concerns. Chats can be saved.

They should also be prepared to remove participants if behaviour is inappropriate or if safeguarding concerns arise. Having more than one responsible person ensures accountability and allows issues to be managed quickly with minimal disruption to the meeting.

At the start of the meeting, hosts should set a clear tone by outlining expectations for behaviour and participation. It can also be helpful to post key meeting guidelines or rules in the chat so that all participants can easily refer to them throughout the session.

## **7. Sharing Personal Information**

Before any recording is shared or published, it must be carefully reviewed and, where necessary, edited to remove personal or sensitive information. This includes names of individuals, prayer requests, health information, or any details that could identify someone without their consent.

Even information shared in a pastoral or prayer context may be confidential and should not be made publicly available without permission. Taking time to review recordings helps ensure compliance with data protection requirements and protects the safety and privacy of all involved.

Where appropriate, key information can be shared within the meeting itself such as in the chat or by using pinned messages on the platform. This might include reminders about recording, how information will be used, and any expectations around privacy.

## **8. Safe Use of AI Features**

Many online platforms, including Zoom, now include AI-powered features such as automatic transcription, captions, or meeting summaries.

While these tools can be helpful, they must be used with care in a safeguarding context. If sensitive, personal or pastoral information is being discussed, these features should be disabled to prevent unintended recording, storage or wider sharing of confidential material.

Churches should ensure that users understand how these tools work, what data is being captured, and where it is stored, so that informed decisions can be made about their safe and appropriate use.

Further guidance on the use of AI from the Methodist Church can be found here:

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/digital-church/digital-training-blog/embracing-ai-with-care-and-caution-interim-guidance-for-methodist-churches/>