

Email, fax and internet Policy

1. Purpose and scope

Lincoln South Methodist Circuit (LSMC) expects all of its ministers, lay employees, circuit stewards and volunteers to make use of computer facilities in a professional manner.

It is the responsibility of ministers, lay employees, circuit stewards and volunteers to ensure that this technology is used in a manner that does not compromise LSMC or breach its policies. This policy document is to be read in conjunction with LSMC's disciplinary procedure.

2. Policy

2.1 Confidentiality

2.1.1 You should not transmit anything in an email or fax message that you would not be comfortable writing in a letter or a memorandum. You should note that electronic messages are admissible as evidence in legal proceedings and have been used successfully in libel cases.

2.1.2 You should never assume that internal messages are necessarily private and confidential, even if marked as such. Matters of a sensitive or personal nature should not be transmitted by email unless absolutely unavoidable. The confidentiality of internal communications can only be ensured if they are sent by internal post or delivered personally by hand.

2.1.3 Internet messages should be treated as non-confidential. Anything sent through the Internet passes through a number of different computer systems all with different levels of security. The confidentiality of messages may be compromised at any point along the way unless the messages are encrypted.

2.2 Offensive messages

2.2.1 You must not send offensive, demeaning or disruptive messages. This includes, but is not limited to, messages inconsistent with LSMC's Equality and Diversity Policy.

2.2.2 You should therefore not send any message which you regard as personal, potentially offensive or frivolous to you or to any recipient.

2.2.3 If you receive mail containing material that is offensive or inappropriate to the church environment then you must delete it immediately. Under no circumstances should such mail be forwarded either internally or externally.

2.3 Passwords

2.3.1 You must not allow other people to use your password. If you anticipate that someone may need access to your confidential files in your absence you should arrange for the files to be copied to somewhere where that person can access them.

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2.4 Viruses

2.4.1 Any files or software downloaded from the Internet or brought from home must be virus checked before use. You should ensure that all anti-virus software is kept up to date and used properly.

2.4.2 You must not run any '.exe' files received by email unless you fully trust the sender and understand the reason they have sent to you. These should be deleted immediately upon receipt without being opened.

2.5 The Internet

2.5.1 Any unauthorised use of Circuit IT equipment and systems is strictly prohibited. Unauthorised use includes but is not limited to connecting, posting or downloading any information unrelated to your employment and in particular pornographic material, engaging in computer hacking and other related activities or attempting to disable or compromise security of information contained on LSMC's computers.

2.5.2 Postings placed on the Internet may display LSMC's address. For this reason you should make certain before posting information that the information reflects the standards and policies of LSMC. Under no circumstances should information of a confidential or sensitive nature be placed on the Internet.

2.5.3 Information posted or viewed on the Internet may constitute published material. Therefore, reproduction of information posted or otherwise available over the Internet may be done only by express permission from the copyright holder.

2.5.4 You must not commit LSMC to any form of contract through the Internet except for on-line purchases up to £100. On-line purchases of £100 or over must be authorised by 2 trustees.

2.6 Interception of communications

2.6.1 LSMC reserves the right to intercept any email for monitoring purposes, record keeping purposes, preventing or detecting crime, investigating or detecting the inappropriate use of LSMC's telecommunication system or ascertaining compliance with LSMC's practices or procedures.

3. Sanctions

LSMC considers this policy to be extremely important. Action will be taken against anyone found to be in breach of the policy. Members of staff will be subject to disciplinary procedure and may be dismissed. In certain circumstances, breach of this policy may be considered gross misconduct resulting in immediate termination of their employment.

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