

## **WhatsApp Code of Conduct**

WhatsApp is a very useful communication tool. However, if a group is not properly managed it could have the potential to breach people's privacy.

As a result, we have put in place the following WhatsApp guidelines to ensure every official St James Clitheroe WhatsApp group or broadcast adheres to and continues to meet GDPR requirements.

### **What is the difference between 'personal' WhatsApp groups and 'official' St James Church WhatsApp groups?**

Sometimes members of the congregation and/or members of the church leadership may set up a personal WhatsApp group that could include other people from our church family. In these situations, St James Church is not responsible for the running, privacy or management of these groups, even if the group discusses St James Church related content. If a personal group has been set up and you would not like to be in it, you have the right to leave that group at any time.

Official St James Church WhatsApp groups are defined as a group that has been created by the church specifically to communicate St James's related information or for St James Church events or groups. The group will be managed by a member of the staff team and will adhere to the guidelines below.

### **Official WhatsApp group guidelines**

We will only create a group in order to communicate church related information. You have the right to leave the group at any time.

There are 2 types of groups: Interactive and broadcast. Both group types have their own guidelines, in order to ensure your privacy is protected. These specifics are outlined below. Also outlined below are additional guidelines for groups with under 18's, and staff team groups.

#### **1. St James Clitheroe Announcements Broadcast**

This is the 'umbrella' channel – anyone who joins a St James' Group will also be added to this channel. This should only be used for announcements – events, reminders and encouragements. Only Admins can post in this channel, and our standards are very high. Please be aware that if people reply to a post in this channel, their contact details are visible to everyone in the channel. Therefore, please discourage people from commenting on the channel.

#### **2. Guidelines for broadcast groups.**

- In most circumstances when a group is created solely for communications purposes, we will set up a WhatsApp broadcast group, so that only the admin can share information. One example of this is the 'Little Fishes' group where parents/carers of Little Fishes children request to join.
- No group member can comment or participate in this type of group.

- Participants should opt-in, either through a link, a QR code or directly from the broadcast channel.
- Admins reserve the right to remove members if the group guidelines are not followed or if the group is no longer relevant to them.
- A broadcast group will be shut down when it is no longer needed, which will be determined by the admin or another member of the church leadership team. The admin will provide members a 2-day notice period before closing the group.

### **3. Guidelines for interactive groups**

An interactive WhatsApp group is a standard type of group, where members can comment and ask questions. An example of this type of group could be a group who serve together, e.g. Welcome Team.

- Participants should opt-in, either through a link, a QR code or directly from the broadcast channel.
- Members are expected to communicate respectfully and in a manner consistent with the values of St James Church. Messages that are offensive, inappropriate, argumentative or unrelated to the purpose of the group will be removed by the admin.
- The admin has the right to remove people from the group immediately if they are sending messages or material that could cause offence or distress.
- Please note that when you join a WhatsApp group, other members of the group will be able to see your phone number and name as stored in WhatsApp.
- Members of the group must not share other members' contact details outside the group. If this happens, the admin has the right to immediately exclude anyone who does this.
- An interactive group will be shut down when it is no longer needed, which will be determined by the admin or another member of the church leadership team. The admin will provide members a 2-day notice period before closing the group.

### **4. Additional guidelines for interactive groups which include under 18's**

- In addition to the above: - We will only communicate with young people where 2 or more adult (DBS'd) leaders are present in the group.
- Parental/guardian consent will be obtained before adding a young person to a group. We make use of WhatsApp group links only sending them to the parents/carers so they must give access to the link for a young person to be able to join.
- All youth team leaders have access to the group.
- All youth team leaders are admins on group messages for accountability.
- Only admins can add people to the groups.

### **5. Guidelines for Admins**

Admins are responsible for ensuring the group follows these guidelines and that communication remains appropriate and relevant.

**6. Guidelines for staff team interactive groups**

- Interactive groups are used within staff team as a means of quick communication.
- Please respect working hours' boundaries and do not send non-urgent messages after 9pm. Use emails after this time.
- If you leave the role for which you were added to the group, you should remove yourself from the group straightaway. Admin reserves the right to remove without notice if you have not done so.

These guidelines exist to help us use WhatsApp responsibly, protect personal information, and maintain a welcoming and respectful church community.