Social networking and electronic communication - a policy for engaging with young people.

General rules:

☑ Be Appropriate, remembering at all times you represent Stranton Church and are a Christian role model.

☑ Remember your limits, and do not keep secrets. If a young person is using electronic forms of communication to disclose abuse or self harm, the same rules apply as if it were face to face. Do not promise confidentiality. If you feel a young person is talking to you about issues you have little experience in, always seek advice.

☑ Save it. Everything. Emails, MSN conversations, facebook messages. Have dedicated folders to drag and drop any contact a young person has with you online.

Emails:

☑ All emails sent to and received from young people should be saved should there be any misunderstanding.

☑ The content of emails should always be 'above reproach' - any content that could be perceived as sexual or in any way promoting illegal or immoral activity should not be sent.

☑ Whenever you write an email, ask yourself 'would I be happy forwarding this to their parents'.

Social Networking Sites

Many organisations have a blanket ban on youth workers accepting young people as 'friends' on Network sites. At Stranton we recognise it can be a great strength to our work to be involved in a young persons life, where we can be a role model online. Many accounts young people read will be filled with anger, hate, unhelpful levels of attention seeking, inappropriate sexual and morally dubious walls and groups. It is here that it is easiest to be the 'light' in a dark place.

If you are uncomfortable with having certain limitations on the content of your account please **do not** accept young people as friends and these sites, and set your account to private. Please remember, and do not be offended, if you are asked to remove something from your account if you have young people as your 'friends'.

Good practice:

☑ Always abide by the terms and conditions of the site. This means, for facebook, please do not accept as friends anyone under the age of 12.

☑ Check your groups and pages - are you 'liking' things that could be seen as inappropriate? If someone looked at the groups, pages, and information out of context what would their impression of you be?

☑ Be willing to delete things that others post on your wall or comments made if they are not suitable for young people to read.

☑ Think about how you can use your online space to echo the ethos and values of Stranton Church and your personal faith, - think about positive status updates, good things you can post, and avoiding 'vaguebooking'. Can anyone tell from your facebook page you are a committed Christian (The 'religion' box doesn't count!)? It's not just about avoiding inappropriate material, but actively promoting a more positive way to live.

☑ Can you use facebook to gently challenge people? For example, if they join a racist group? Or they start posting unsuitable pictures?

Still unsure?

The bible has two 'filters' you could run your account past before you post/join/like anything: *whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.* (Phil 4:8), and *Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.* (Ephesians 4:29).