



New Ground Churches

Communications

Policy

Nov 2019

NEW GROUND CHURCHES COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 For New Ground, communication plays an essential role in the conduct of our business. How you communicate with people not only reflects on you as an individual but also on us as an organisation. We value your ability to communicate effectively with colleagues, church leaders and other contacts.
- 1.2 This policy applies to all individuals working for New Ground whether employed, grant-funded or volunteer.
- 1.3 Although the detailed discussion is limited to use of email and internet facilities, the general principles underlying all parts of this policy also apply to mail and telephone communications.

2. GENERAL PRINCIPLES

- 2.1 You must use New Ground's information technology and communications facilities sensibly, lawfully, and consistently within your duties, with respect for your colleagues and for New Ground.
- 2.2 All information relating to our churches and our organisation operations is confidential. You must treat our paper-based and electronic information with utmost care.
- 2.3 Many aspects of communication are protected by intellectual property rights, which are infringed by copying. Downloading, uploading, posting, copying, possessing, processing and distributing material from the internet may be an infringement of copyright or of other intellectual property rights.
- 2.4 Particular care must be taken when using email as a means of communication because all expressions of fact, intention and opinion in an email may bind you and/or New Ground and can be produced in court, or disclosed in response to a Subject Access Request under the Data Protection Act, in the same way as other kinds of written statements.
- 2.5 The advantage of the internet and email is that they are extremely easy and informal ways of accessing and disseminating information, but this means that it is also easy to send out ill-considered statements. All messages sent on email systems or via the internet should demonstrate the same professionalism as that which would be taken when writing a letter. You must not use these media to do or say anything, which would be subject to disciplinary or legal action in any other context such as sending any discriminatory (on the grounds of a person's sex, race, disability, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief. If you are in doubt about a course of action, take advice from Kevin Rose.

3. **USE OF EMAIL**

3.1 **Generally**

3.1.1 Always use an email signature which contains your name, job title/role, New Ground and www.newgroundchurches.org (as a link), plus legal information as in the example below:

Joe Stevens
Communications
New Ground Churches
newgroundchurches.org
New Ground Churches, a company limited by guarantee,
registered in England under company number 6281483.

The company registered office is
33 Amy Road, Oxted, Surrey RH8 0PW

3.1.2 Do not amend any messages received and, except where specifically authorised by the other person, do not access any other person's inbox or other email folders nor send any email purporting to come from another person, with the exception of your role as PA or EA.

3.1.3 It is good practice to re-read and check an email before sending.

3.1.4 If you copy an email to others, it may breach the Data Protection Act if it reveals all the recipients' email addresses to each recipient (e.g. in the case of marketing and mailing lists).

It can also breach duties of confidentiality (e.g. in the case of internal emails to members of a staff benefit scheme). Accordingly, it may be appropriate to use the 'Bcc' (blind carbon copy) field instead of the 'Cc' (carbon copy) field when addressing an email to more than one recipient. If in doubt, seek advice from Kevin Rose or Joe Stevens.

3.2 **Business use**

3.2.1 If an email message or attachment contains information, which is time-critical, bear in mind that an email is not necessarily an instant communication and consider whether it is the most appropriate means of communication.

3.2.2 If you have sent an important document, always telephone to confirm that the email has been received and read.

3.3 **Personal Use**

3.3.1 New Ground's email facilities are provided for the purposes of our business, and are not to be used for your own personal purposes. It is worth noting that New Ground may need to monitor communications for the reasons given in item 9.1.

3.3.2 Under no circumstances may New Ground's facilities be used in connection with the operation or management of any business or organisation other than that of New Ground unless express written permission has been obtained from Kevin Rose or Dale Barlow.

4. USE OF INTERNET

4.1 We trust you to use the internet responsibly and to do so while observing section 4.2-5.1.9. Bear in mind at all times that, when visiting a website, information identifying your PC may be logged. Therefore any activity you engage in via the internet may affect New Ground.

4.2 We recognise the need for individuals to have to carry out some personal tasks during working hours, e.g. for internet banking, and this is permitted subject to the same rules as are set out for personal email use in item 3.3.2 of this policy.

4.3 You are strongly discouraged from providing your New Ground email address when using public websites for non-business purposes, such as online shopping. This must be kept to a minimum and done only where necessary, as it results in you and New Ground receiving substantial amounts of unwanted email.

5. MISUSE OF NEW GROUND'S FACILITIES AND SYSTEMS

5.1 Misuse of New Ground's facilities and systems, including its telephone, email and internet systems, in breach of this policy will be treated seriously and dealt with accordingly. In particular, viewing, accessing, transmitting, posting, downloading or uploading any of the following materials in the following ways (this list is not exhaustive):

5.1.1 material which is sexist, racist, homophobic, xenophobic, pornographic, paedophilic or similarly discriminatory and/or offensive;

5.1.2 offensive, obscene, derogatory or criminal material or material which is liable to cause embarrassment to New Ground and any of its staff or bring the reputation of New Ground and any of its staff into disrepute;

5.1.3 any defamatory material about any person or organisation or material which includes statements which are untrue or of a deceptive nature;

5.1.4 any material which violates the privacy of others or unfairly criticises or misrepresents others;

5.1.5 confidential information about New Ground and any of its staff or customers/clients;

5.1.6 any other statement which is likely to create any liability (whether criminal or civil, and whether for you or New Ground);

5.1.7 material in breach of copyright and/or other intellectual property rights;

5.1.8 online gambling; or

5.1.9 unsolicited commercial or advertising material, chain letters or other junk mail of any kind.

6. SYSTEM SECURITY

- 6.1 Keep all confidential information secure, use it only for the purposes intended and do not disclose it to any unauthorised third party.
- 6.2 Keep your system passwords safe. Do not disclose them to anyone. Those who have a legitimate reason to access other users' inboxes must be given permission from that other user.
- 6.3 You should always exercise caution when opening emails from unknown external sources or where, for any reason, an email appears suspicious – delete it.

7. SOCIAL MEDIA, BLOGS AND WEBSITES

- 7.1 This part of the policy and procedures in it apply to content that you publish on the internet (e.g. your contributions to blogs, social networking or content-sharing sites) even if created, updated, modified or contributed to outside of working hours or when using personal IT systems.
- 7.2 New Ground recognise that in your own private time you may wish to publish content on the internet.
- 7.3 If you post any content to the internet, written, vocal or visual, which identifies, you as a member of New Ground staff or potentially acting on behalf of New Ground, New Ground expects you, at all times, to conduct yourself appropriately and in a manner which is consistent with your contract of employment and/or with New Ground's policies and procedures.
- 7.4 If a blog posting clearly identifies that you work for, or may imply you speak on behalf of, New Ground and you express any idea or opinion then you should add a disclaimer such as "these are my own personal views and not those of New Ground"
- 7.5 If someone from the media or press contacts you about your online publications that relate to New Ground you should talk to Kevin Rose or Dale Barlow before responding.
- 7.6 Online publications, which do not identify the author as a member of New Ground staff and do not mention New Ground and are purely concerned with personal matters, will normally fall outside the scope of New Ground's communications policy.

8. MONITORING OF COMMUNICATIONS BY NEW GROUND

- 8.1 New Ground is ultimately responsible for all business communications but subject to that will, so far as possible and appropriate, respect your privacy and autonomy while working. New Ground may monitor your business communications for reasons which include:
 - 8.1.1 providing evidence of financial transactions;
 - 8.1.2 ensuring that New Ground's organisation procedures, policies and contracts with staff are adhered to;
 - 8.1.3 complying with any legal obligations;
 - 8.1.4 monitoring standards of service and staff performance;

8.1.5 preventing or detecting unauthorised use of New Ground's communications systems or criminal activities; and

8.1.6 maintaining the effective operation of New Ground's communications systems.

8.2 Sometimes it is necessary for New Ground to access your business communications during your absence, such as when you are away because you are ill or while you are on holiday. Unless your mailbox settings are such that the individuals who need to do this already have permission to view your inbox, access will be granted only with the permission of one of the persons authorised to grant such access.

9. DATA PROTECTION

9.1 As a member of New Ground who uses our communications facilities, you will inevitably be involved in processing personal data for New Ground as part of your job. Data protection is about the privacy of individuals, and is governed by the Data Protection Act 1998. This Act defines, among others, terms as follows:

9.1.1 "data" generally means information which is computerised or in a structured hard copy form;

9.1.2 "personal data" is data which can identify someone, such as a name, a job title, a photograph;

9.1.3 "processing" is anything you do with data – just having data amounts to processing; and

9.1.4 "data controller" is the person who controls the purposes and manner of processing of personal data – this will be New Ground in the case of personal data processed for the organisation.

9.2 Whenever and wherever you are processing personal data for New Ground you must keep it secret, confidential and secure, and you must take particular care not to disclose them to any other person (whether inside or outside New Ground unless authorised to do so. Do not use any such personal data except as authorised by New Ground for the purposes of your job.

9.3 The Data Protection Act gives every individual the right to see all the information, which any data controller holds about him or her. Bear this in mind when recording personal opinions about someone, whether in an email or otherwise. Any personal remarks and opinions must be made or given responsibly, and they must be relevant and appropriate as well as accurate and justifiable.

10. COMPLIANCE WITH THIS POLICY

10.1 Failure to comply with this policy may result in disciplinary action being taken, which may include summary dismissal, and/or in the withdrawal of permission to use New Ground's equipment for personal purposes. If there is anything in this policy that you do not understand, please discuss it with Kevin Rose or Joe Stevens.

10.2 Please note that the procedures and policies outlined in this policy, and in any related policy, may be reviewed or changed at any time. You will be alerted to important changes.