SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Social media platforms have become an increasingly popular channel for communication in the 21st century. They provide ways to share content with a wide audience, and as such are excellent tools for sharing information about Freemasonry and Masonic activities. However, as with any powerful tool, social media need to be used with caution, as incorrect use can have a damaging impact on Freemasonry's public image, and therefore on Freemasonry itself. This should be a matter of common sense. This policy has been written to advise Freemasons on how to use social media within the compass of propriety.

1. Digital Ambassadorship

It is important to note that any interactions a Freemason has on social media may be visible to anyone in the world: while it is possible to restrict the audience of one's posts, it is not possible to control how others will react to them. A private post can easily be shared and reposted publicly by anyone who has access to it. Even if an original post is deleted or edited, someone could already have shared it in its original form. As far as social media are concerned, everything one does or says is permanently recorded, and there is no such thing as a truly private post.

Acting as an ambassador for Freemasonry online is part of a Freemason's duty, and is within the scope of Rule 179 of the Book of Constitutions which states that a Freemason "…has a duty not to engage in activity which may bring Freemasonry into disrepute". Rules (civil and Masonic) and expectations that apply to one's daily conduct apply equally within the digital sphere, as comments may be taken out of context and used as representative of the views of the United Grand Lodge of England.

Below is a list of behaviours and topics to avoid when posting on social media. These apply to personal accounts, as well as to accounts that individual Freemasons may manage on behalf of a Lodge, Metropolitan, Province, District, or other Masonic entity. They apply to any Freemason who is identifiable as a Freemason online, whether he is posting in Masonic or non-Masonic channels. This list is not comprehensive, but is intended to act as an introductory guide to topics or behaviours that are inappropriate for posting to any audience on social media.

When posting on social media platforms, a Freemason must not:

(a)   produce, link to, or refer to any content that is illegal, defamatory, or likely to offend others
(b)   cause or contribute to any hostile or unproductive arguments, or carry on any private piques or quarrels (that is to say, good-natured debate is fine, but one should be prepared to abandon the exchange if it ceases to be friendly)

(c)   discuss or allude to any of the Masonic Signs, Tokens, or Words

(d)   claim to speak for any Masonic body (e.g. a Lodge, Metropolitan, a Province or District, a charity or committee, or UGLE) on whose behalf he is not expressly authorised to speak (for instance, membership of a Lodge in London does not give one the authority to speak on behalf of Metropolitan Grand Lodge)

(e)   identify anyone else as a Freemason without his express consent

(f)   refer to any personal information about any Freemason without his express consent (such as address, telephone number, or anything else covered by the Data Protection Act 1998; see: http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/29/contents)

(g)   attempt to use Masonic channels as a vehicle for personal profit, or for any other form of self-promotion

(h)   attack United Grand Lodge of England or any other legitimate Masonic authority.

2. Best Practice

A Freemason may publicly share any Masonic content that contributes to a positive public image of Freemasonry, such as charitable work and events, good causes supported by Freemasons, and information about Masonic history.

Social media channels can also be used to share information only relevant to Freemasons, but care should be exercised to use a more restricted channel, such as a closed or "secret" Facebook group. Topics that might be discussed here include:

(a)   discussions about Masonic allegory and symbolism (as long as there is no mention of any Masonic Signs, Tokens, or Words)

(b)   background information about other Masonic Orders (as long as it does not ruin the experience for those who are not members)

(c)   unusual visits to other Lodges (e.g. for a special ceremony).

When posting about non-Masonic subjects, it is important to remember to adhere to the guidelines outlined in the Digital Ambassadorship section above.