ST MARY'S PCC: POLICY FOR USING VIDEO CONFERENCING PLATFORMS

1. Introduction

1.1 The coronavirus pandemic and Government's lockdown policy, which began on 23 March 2020, closed places of worship. This has led to many churches, including St Mary's, using video conferencing platforms such as Zoom[1] for the first time.

1.2 These services and other meetings have proved essential in:

(i) maintaining our duty to worship God

(ii) having fellowship and ensuring mutual support at a time of isolation and social distancing, especially for those who live alone.

Since the lockdown measures are likely to continue in some form for the foreseeable future, it follows that St Mary's use of Zoom or a similar platform will also continue.

2. Purpose

2.1 It is therefore necessary to adopt a strategic approach to use of such platforms by St Mary's, especially to ensure security and to take account of Diocesan advice about safeguarding by adopting a *Policy for using Video Conferencing Platforms* (The Policy).

3. Definitions

3.1 "Meeting" or "meetings" means all meetings that take place within the organisational structure of St Mary's. This includes Sunday School, the PCC and its sub committees, staff meetings, Connect Groups, St Mary's Runners, Meet at the Moon and Drop-In.

4. Practical use of conferencing platforms

4.1 The PCC shall have its own account(s) (the PCC's account) to ensure security and for legal clarity/responsibility.

4.2 The accounts of church members or employees shall not to be used for church worship or other meetings that take place within the organisational structure of St Mary's (such as Sunday School, PCC and sub committees, staff meetings etc). However, this shall not prevent individual church members using their own accounts for such meetings as *Connect Groups*, *St Mary's Runners*, *Meet at the Moon* or other such meetings that would otherwise take place outside St Mary's premises. This Policy should nevertheless be publicised to such groups which must adhere to the usage set down herein.

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[1]Zoom is a cloud platform for video and audio conferencing, chat, and webinars across mobile, desktop, and room systems.

4.3 *Meetings and services using the PCC's account:* The PCC's account and its passwords shall be used only by nominated officers. These include the Vicar, Curate, Family & Children's Worker and any others, e.g. office staff, whom the Vicar appoints. Nominated officers, and those co-hosting a service or meeting where children are likely to be present, must be DBS checked.

4.4 *Meetings using members' own accounts:* Church members using their own accounts for meetings must not invite children without prior permission from the Vicar. They and any co-host] must also be DBS checked and follow the additional procedures at 4.7 below.

4.5 Services and meetings must not be advertised on St Mary's website or social media such as Facebook. The link/password must be sent directly to individuals.

4.6 The following instructions are to be followed regarding services and meetings:

- The host must ensure that the latest updates have been installed.
- The host must ensure that the service or meeting is kept private by using the waiting room/password facilities to admit individuals. If the host does not recognise the individual, they must not be admitted.
- The host must set the screensharing option to host (or co-host) only.
- The host must immediately remove an individual from the service/meeting if there is any behaviour which might compromise security or safeguarding or be at odds with the sanctity of the service. This includes the sending of inappropriate messages through the Chat function.
- In an emergency, the host should shut down the meeting.
- The host must not use the camera function (a host-only function) to record anyone without receiving their prior permission.

4.7 The PCC's account may be used for services and meetings intended primarily for children, subject to the above practices. In addition:

- Parents, especially those whose children are attending for the first time, shall be advised using the wording set out at the Annex.
- A note shall be kept of those invited.

5. Safeguarding Policy

5.1 This policy forms a discrete part of the PCC's *Safeguarding Policy*.

6. Review

6.1 This policy should be kept under continuous review and updated accordingly in the first two months following adoption.

Policy approved by PCC of St Mary's Church Watford
Date: April 2020

April 2020

Annex: Advice to parents

Safeguarding is paramount and in view of this we have set up the online meeting using the safety features of a password and waiting-room; and we will lock the meeting after 10 minutes.

To help us safeguard all of the children and others, by participating in this service you are agreeing to:
1. Supervise the logging-in to any session and the participation of your children throughout, including being responsible for safeguarding.
2. Ensure your name is showing when you enter the Zoom meeting.
3. Ensure that you do not use the "share file" option unless authorized beforehand by the host.
4. Only remain in the session if your child/ren is with you - unless you are one of the Sunday School staff team.

If you have any questions regarding this service or access using Zoom technology please contact Cath Da Costa on 07961564385. If you have any safeguarding concerns with regards to this service, please contact St Mary's Safeguarding Officer Claire Edwards via stmaryssafeguarding10@gmail.com or our Vicar Rev Tony Rindl on tony.rindl@stmaryswatford.org.uk or check out our website www.stmaryswatford.org for our safeguarding procedure.

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