

WhatsApp code of conduct

INTRODUCTION

WhatsApp is a very useful tool which St George's Church, Lupset uses to communicate with the congregation and between various groups in the church. We use these officially, as authorised by the PCC, and personally to support home groups and other occasional meetings. This app is very helpful as a means of passing on information, sharing thoughts, prayers, comments and organising church activities and events. It has been a great help to us all since the Covid Pandemic of 2020.

We do realise though that with all the helpful things WhatsApp brings, if a group is not properly managed it could have the potential to breach people's privacy. In order to protect everyone, individuals and St George's Church, Lupset, we have brought together the following WhatsApp guidelines to ensure every official St George's Church, Lupset WhatsApp group meets GDPR requirements. Data Protection is something St George's Church, Lupset takes very seriously. If you want to know more about how we use your personal data and privacy rights, please see our privacy notice on the GDPR form or on the porch noticeboard.

Personal WhatsApp groups

Sometimes members of the congregation and /or members of the church leadership may set up a personal WhatsApp group for specific purposes. These could include other people from our church family and this might be a homegroup, an event planning team or a particular church activity. In these situations, St George's Church is not responsible for the running, privacy or management of these groups, even if the group discusses church activities related content. If a personal group has been set up and you decide you would not like to be in it, you have the right to leave that group at any time.

Official St George's Church, Lupset WhatsApp groups.

These are groups that have been created by the church specifically to communicate church related information (including events or prayer). The groups will be managed by members of the church leadership team and will adhere to the guidelines below. If you join a group you have the right to leave at any time.

There are two types of group that you could be added to

- **Information groups** where notices and information is posted and there is no opportunity to respond directly
- **Congregation support groups** where daily prayers, songs and thoughts are posted and group members can respond.

Each type of group has its own guidelines in order to ensure your privacy is protected.

Members of the congregation must have completed and signed a St George's Church, Lupset Data Protection form to give permission for their information to be shared before they can request to be added to either group. Membership of either group is open to congregation members over the age of 16

Any groups including people under 16 will be monitored and access will only be with parental permission.

The Data Protection forms will be updated every two years to ensure currency and act as a reminder to participants.

The WPeople who do not attend St George's Church for a period of two years will be removed from the official St George's WhatsApp groups

Information Groups

- When a group is created solely for communications within St George's Church we will set up a WhatsApp Information group for which only the administrators can pass on information.
- No group member can comment or participate in this type of group.
- Once the group has been set up, the administrators will inform you of the purpose of this group and tag this to the top of the group
- The administrators have the right to remove members without warning should the person no longer be part of the congregation or relevant to the content being shared.
- Members of any Information Groups cannot share other members' contact details outside the group. If this happens the administrators have the right to immediately exclude the person who does this.
- Only administrators can add people to the Information group. If you think another member of the congregation should be part of this group, please let an administrator know.
- An information group will be shut down when it is no longer needed. This will be determined by the group administrators or another member of the church leadership team.
- The administrators will provide members a 2-day notice period before closing the group.

Congregation Support Groups

In some circumstances an interactive WhatsApp group will to be created. An interactive WhatsApp group is your standard type of group, where members can post items, comment and ask questions of the group.

- Once an interactive group has been set up, the administrator will then inform you of the purpose of this group. An example of this type of group could be an official prayer group where members can share prayer requests so that the other group members can pray.
- The administrators have the right to remove people from the group immediately if they are sending messages or material which could cause offence or distress.
- Members of any Congregational Support Group cannot share other members' contact details outside the group. If this happens, the administrators have the right to immediately exclude anyone who does this.
- Only the administrators can add people to an interactive group. If you think another member of the congregation should be part of this group, please let an administrator know.
- A congregation support group will be shut down when it is no longer needed, which will be determined by the administrator or another member of the church leadership team.

The PCC of St George's Church, Lupset agreed this to be the church Code of Conduct for the use of Whats App at their meeting on July 8th 2025