

New Religious Movements

Advice about advertisements

Version: 02

Last updated: 3 November 2017

Author: Anne Richards



THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

New Religious Movement-related advertisements in church newsletters, websites and other communications

There have been some problems when church-related newsletters, magazines, websites and announcements have carried advertisements for events, practices or therapies associated with new religious movements and alternative spiritualities. This sometimes happens when members of a congregation want to add or promote events on behalf of people they know, or because a magazine contains community news and advertisements.

Sometimes, people reading the material have complained because they think the Church of England should not be associated with such advertisements, or because they think that people will believe the Church of England endorses the religions, events, practices or therapies which are advertised.

Some complaints have been received where members of the public have indeed believed that the advertisement comes from the recommendation from the church, parish priest or Parochial Church Council and have been upset by their contact with the group or practice.

On a number of occasions, formal complaints have been made, which can be stressful and time-consuming to deal with.

Some examples of advertisements in church-related publicity which have caused concern include:

- Psychic nights in local community venues
- Spiritualism and séance events
- Advertisements for healing therapies and practices such as reiki, crystals etc.
- Advertisements for some yoga events involving spiritual teaching
- Workshops involving alternative spirituality techniques and practices such as getting in touch with a spirit guide

Suggested action

If you are approached with a new advertisement and you are not sure about the event, practice or therapy involved, check it out using a trustworthy source. You can contact the national New Religious Movements adviser, your local diocesan NRM adviser if there is one, or ask INFORM at inform@lse.ac.uk. Find out what is involved in the event, whether it falls under the New Religious Movements policy area and whether you think it might cause offence or concern to Christians reading the publication or website where the

advertisement is placed. If you want to refuse the advertisement, we can help you frame a response.

Often requests for advertisements arise from informal contacts with people involved in new religious movements. Such contacts can be important and can lead to good opportunities for pastoral contact and sharing the Christian faith with them. However, it can be important to maintain proper boundaries. If refusing an advertisement is going to cause difficulty or pastoral problems; if you have a longstanding arrangement to run an advertisement; if the advertisement belongs to community news within your publicity; or if you have no control over what kind of events are promoted or advertised; you should consider inserting a suitable disclaimer into your own section of news.

Examples of such disclaimers might be:

‘[The Church/parish priest/PCC] Is not responsible for the content of external websites/advertisements/announcements’

‘Please note that the presence of advertisements in this publication/on this site does not imply endorsement by the [Church/parish priest/PCC]’ of what is advertised.’

‘The Church/parish priest/PCC has prepared the content of this website responsibly and carefully, but disclaims all warranties, express or implied, as to the accuracy of the information contained in any of the materials on this website or on other linked websites or on any subsequent links.’

‘The Church/parish priest/PCC encourages you to exercise discretion in responding or replying to advertisements. We do not review the goods, services, events or meetings which may be offered through advertising and so we are not responsible for their content.’

These are just suggestions and you may wish to consult with your diocesan registrar’s office about exact forms of wording suitable for your publication or website.

You may also wish to carry a link to the Church of England’s web-page on New Religious Movements.