



The Church of Scotland

# Top Tips for Photography

An introduction to best practice when taking photographs

VERSION: 1.0

In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

Matthew 5:16

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## 1. Introduction

Cameras have changed the way we see the world, the way we communicate and how we share our stories. The Church has a rich heritage of storytelling and imagery and today we all have the ability to capture images - a privilege that comes with a responsibility. Here are some guidelines to help you make the best of capturing and storing photographs.

The Church of Scotland seeks to promote best practice across all online as well as offline visual platforms. As Scotland's national Church, as well as an integral part of the nation, our voice carries relevance, influence and speaks with authority in a modern Scotland and across the world.

## 2. The Essentials - things to think about when taking a photograph

- What is the photo trying to convey?
- Who/what needs to be in the photo?
- Does the photo add value/meaning to the story you are trying to tell?
- Do you have permission to take the picture?
- Do you have permission from individuals and/or permission to be in a certain location/show a particular item?
- Always make a note of the names (including correct spelling) and titles of the people highlighted in your photo to ensure your caption is accurate
- If you are not confident in taking a satisfactory photograph, ask for help and the Communications Department will assist you

This document and other visual resources (e.g. advice on Social Media) are available from the official Church of Scotland website:

**[http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/resources/subjects/communication\\_resources](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/resources/subjects/communication_resources)**

### 3. Composition

- First clean your lens - a smudge can be difficult to see but could spoil your photo
- Is there enough light?
- Natural light from a window should ensure a nice, even light across your subject's face
- Try placing your subject facing a window at a 45° angle
- The light source (sun, lamp etc.) should be behind the photographer
- Take the initiative and don't be afraid to ask your subject(s) to move as groups in a straight line often look 'forced'
- Ensure you have enough time to set up the picture, take test shots and check your viewfinder to find the best composition and look for any issues
- Take more shots than you think you need - try out different options
- Remove anything from the picture that does not need to be there (e.g. lanyards, coffee cups, bags, personal mementos)
- Clean up the background - you don't want plant pots/lampshades/signs seemingly growing out of your subject's head
- Ensure there is nothing inadvertently on display, such as personal information on a PC screen or phone numbers/names/pictures on a notice board
- Keep the background as simple and uncluttered as possible
- People who feel awkward look awkward, so keep poses natural
- Try a pose that matches the feeling you want to convey - does it need a simple smile or a more serious demeanour?
- When taking photos of people shoot from slightly above eye level for a much more flattering angle
- In terms of format aim for a high resolution and save your photos as a JPG file
- Think about whether you need a landscape or portrait format, or both
- Don't strain to capture a detail (stained glass window/ architectural or landscape detail) that squeezes your subject into the periphery of the frame
- If taking photos at an event let the audience know and give people an opportunity to opt out
- Do not add filters or effects to images unless using specialist apps like Instagram



### 3. Composition (continued)

When choosing imagery, always try to use images that are people focused, warm, positive, aspirational and thought provoking. These images need to illustrate people's relationship with community, society, creation and the world.

Faith and charity are broad and engaging topics. Our aim should be to communicate clearly and demonstrate a connection to the organisation's role in contemporary society.

The images should always be of good quality and high resolution.

Please contact the Communications Department if there is a requirement to procure the services of a professional photographer, source images from stock websites or from existing image banks.

*Is it in focus?*

Often, we are asked to use 'user generated images' (snaps), these can work well online in social media channels but typically the print medium works best with high resolution, good quality professional images.



*Keep it positive!*

By focussing on images of positive outcomes for challenging topics (e.g. mental health), readers will see the value of our work.



*Building bridges!*

Our work is about reaching grassroots Church membership and communities.



*Eye contact!*

Smiles and friendly expressions demonstrate our togetherness.



*Location!*

Our work covers all of Scotland and beyond... We are an outward looking organisation.



## 4. Commissioned Professional Photography

- Ideal for documenting high profile events
- Good for national press and stories that have a wide 'reach'
- A professional picture can help secure good coverage
- Adds 'real value' to your online and offline content
- Does require a budget

To commission professional photography, please contact the Communications Team.

## 5. Storing images

- Images taken for church-wide use should be filed on a shared drive so they are easily accessible to the team rather than stored on a personal or local drive
- Use a standard naming system e.g. daisy\_heart\_and\_soul\_2018
- Using lower case and the underscore in the name makes your photos more searchable online



The Church of Scotland  

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Communications Department

[www.churchofscotland.org.uk](http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk)

Scottish Charity Number: SC011353