SC022 Electronic communication guidelines

We acknowledge that the use of electronic media for communication is part of everyday life, however, we need to be mindful of the position of trust and power that we have as leaders.

General principles:

- As far as it is practical, interact electronically with children and young people as a team, not as individuals, e.g. group emails or sms.

- Seek parental permission before communicating with a child/young person electronically.

- Leaders must not transmit, retrieve or store any communication that is: discriminatory or harassing, derogatory, obscene, sexually explicit or pornographic, defamatory, threatening, for any purpose that is illegal or contrary to your code of conduct.

- Do not send any communication that attempts to hide your identity or represent the sender as someone else.

Telephone Contact

- Inform parents/guardians of the phone call, whenever possible.
- If a child/young person initiates a phone call, which will require a long conversation, try to arrange to have the conversation face to face in a child safe setting.

Email Contact

- All emails to children/young people should have the church email address cc'd into them.
- Consider setting up a purpose-built email address for communication to your participants.
- Use purpose-only emails e.g. "Meet at this place, at this time" or general conversations e.g. "How was the excursion today?" Deeper conversations regarding issues that are more personal should be held face-to-face.
- As far as possible, save all emails to and from children/young people in a folder.

SMS Contact

- SMS communication should generally be restricted to purpose-only communication.
- If a longer sms conversation begins, suggest a conversation at the program.
- Avoid language that conveys emotional content, such as "I love the way ....", "You are loved..."

Social Networks

- Internal mail should be restricted to purpose-only messages (as above).

- Writing on 'walls' /public paces should be kept to a minimum and should only be general in nature e.g. "Hey, hope you're having a good week, cya Sunday" or other light conversations.
- Do not give out any details of children/young people on 'walls' e.g. name of school, email address, home address, phone numbers, etc.
- Leaders should not enter into a closed one-on-one conversation with a child/young person. If a child/young person invites you into a conversation, you should bring in a third party.
- Leaders should use discernment and wisdom when having a multi-person conversation. Your conversations should be above reproach.

Photos

- Photos should be taken by an appointed Leader, with parental consent.
- Do not photograph any child/young person who has asked not to be photographed or whose parent has not given permission. Be aware of custody issues in which posting an image of a child may result in concerns for their safety or welfare.
- Photography should focus on the activity and not on a particular child/young person.
- All children/young people must be appropriately dressed when photographed.
- Never post photos of children/young people on the internet without parental permission.
- If you do find a photo of a youth/children's activity posted on the internet by a young person, gently ask them if they have parental permission from everyone in the photo to post it. If they don't then advise them to either seek permission or remove it from the internet.
- Photos taken on personal devices of ministry activities should be deleted once forwarded to the appropriate person for use on authorised ministry social media sites.