

23 ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

Introduction

Pastoral care and general communication is an integral part of youth and children's ministry and something that is to be encouraged in ministry. Pastoral care for youth and children will be, primarily, through face to face contact, but increasingly communication will utilise social media.

Aim

This policy aims to help embrace the opportunities provided by social media, whilst also avoiding inappropriate or unwise behaviour. In particular this policy will focus on on-line interactions with people under 18 years of age.

Definition of 'Youth Influencers'

Official youth leaders are not the only people who deal with young people in the church community. While they perhaps come into contact with young people on a more regular basis than others, through the programs and gatherings of the church, there are a wider sphere of people who also need to communicate with young people. The term "youth influencers", therefore, includes, but is not limited to, those who interact on a regular basis with young people (under eighteen) through youth group, small groups, one-on-one discipleship, music teams, services, kids' ministry and any other interactions that may take place under the umbrella of our church.

Rationale

The policy is needed because:

- (1) Some forms of communication are illegal or dangerous for youth influencers to be using with young people.
- (2) Youth influencers are looked up to by young people and the way they use electronic communication tools can have an impact on young people.
- (3) Youth influencers need to be actively promoting safe environments for young people as well as protecting themselves and the organisation/s that they represent.
- (4) Information in emails, or posted on the internet or sent in text or video messages can be reproduced and used in ways that were not originally intended.

This policy is based on Parish Handbook of The Anglican Diocese of Melbourne.

The accompanying procedures and guidelines establish appropriate boundaries when using e-communications with children and youth.

St Jude's E-communications Procedure and Guidelines

General Guidelines

Youth leaders and influencers will:

- Be courteous and engage in respectful interactions.
- Be knowledgeable about and practice privacy principles.
- Be knowledgeable about and take care in social networking.
- Not knowingly transmit, retrieve or store any communication that is discriminatory, harassing, derogatory, obscene, sexually explicit or pornographic, defamatory or threatening.
- Consider if electronic communication is the best medium for a communication.
- Not use electronic communication for any form of rebuke.
- Be mindful that any post may be perceived by the reader as the voice of the Church and opinions given may be thought of as coming from the church, or as church policy or the vicar's opinion.
- Inform St Jude's Children and Youth Minister if emails or other communications are received of a very personal nature.
- Not send any electronic communication that attempts to hide their identity or represent oneself as someone else.

Accountability of Youth Leaders

Youth leaders should inform the Children and Youth Minister (and each other, where appropriate) of all online interactions, ongoing and one-off, leader-initiated and youth-initiated that they have with youth. Parents/guardians should be aware of any form of ongoing communication leaders have (on and offline) with youth outside of face-to-face interactions at church, youth group, and similar situations.

It should be made clear that online communication is should never be the default or preferable means of communicating with youth, particularly about anything of a sensitive or personal nature – such interactions should take place offline. Even if initiated by youth, lengthy interactions should be moved offline as soon as possible.

Private conversations online should never be initiated with youth by leaders, and should always occur with at least one other leader as part of the conversation. Such interactions should never be substituted for offline interaction, and should never be used to discuss matters of a personal or sensitive nature.

If a private conversation is initiated by a youth with a leader, beyond that of a brief and simple update (eg. "I'm running 10 mins late") the leader should:

- Move the conversation into an offline form (appropriate phone call, face-to-face meeting), if this is impossible, the leader should not meaningfully continue the interaction until after having consulted with the Children and Youth Minister.
- Inform the Children and Youth Minister that the interaction has taken place, keeping a copy of the conversation in-full for reference.

Youth E-Communication Code of Conduct

All youth participating in St Jude's activities and their parents are required to sign St Jude's Youth E-Communication Code of Conduct (Appendix B).

Telephone

- Youth leaders should not seek phone contact details of minors except for ministry purposes, nor should they give out their own details, except for ministry purposes. Leaders should not contact minors via the phone except for ministry purposes. Parent(s)/guardian(s) should be made aware of any leaders that have contact details for the minors in their care, and the expectations and limitations of interaction with minors by phone should be made explicit.
- Whenever possible ensure that a parent of the young person is aware of the phone call.

Email

- All emails to young people should have at least one other youth influencer cc'd into them or cc'd to a storage email account that is accessible by the Children and Youth Minister (e.g. a gmail account) for future reference if required.
- Emails should generally be restricted to purpose only emails (e.g. event details).
- As far as possible save all emails to and from young people

SMS Communication

Record or save text messages that are sent and received from young people that have a level of depth or seriousness that goes beyond simple sharing of information (e.g. "We're meeting here"). This should include the content, the time, the date and the recipient/sender.

Social Media Communication

Numerous social media tools are now widely used. Listed below are main social media tools that young people use at the time of writing. The recommendations for youth influencers and leaders given in the 'Facebook' section would apply equally to the majority of other social media sites.

Facebook

- Set an example of good behaviour, in verbal and visual form.
- Posting written comments, photos, or videos of a personal nature should be done with the utmost care. Thinking through how comments, photos, or videos may be seen by other people is a valuable habit.
- Posting on other people's profiles should be general and kept to a minimum, particularly with young people. It is best to keep conversations public so other people can see what's going on.
- Comments, whether on their profile or in comments, are not to be crude or rude and are to be done in a way that will not be misconstrued by a third-party viewing them.
- Be conscious of what you write and how others may interpret it. Sarcasm, irony, and jokes can seem funny but can be misinterpreted by others.
- Do not write negatively about other people or organisations.
- Do not publicly express anger, bitter disappointment and other heated emotions when posting.
- Keep a close eye on the ever-changing privacy settings.
- You should maximize your privacy as much as is practical. Make sure that the people who need to see your posts are only the people who actually see them.
- For guidance about using photos please see the 'Photo' section.

Youth Specific

- Youth leaders should not ‘friend’ minors on social media, and should only ever respond to friendship requests. Before accepting, leaders should think carefully about the possible implications and results of becoming an online friend of any particular minor, as well as the potential consequences of refusing to accept their request. Leaders must discuss the suitability of accepting a friend request with the Children’s and Youth Minister.
- Youth leaders will not initiate conversations at-length online, especially not conversations of a personal or sensitive nature. Online interactions are to be for practical purposes and light-hearted, public communication; overall the involvement of the leader in the youth’s online activities is to be minimal.
- The Children’s and Youth Minister will keep a record of youth who have a friend request accepted by a youth leader and wherever possible the parents are informed.
- All youth influencers should be very careful with whom they interact and what is visible on their profile.
- Private messages should be purpose-only messages, but if they go beyond this another youth influencer should be in the conversation.
- Do not post any private details of a young person on any other “wall”, “profile” or “event”. Please check with other youth influencers if they are happy for their details to be published in an open forum.
- It is recommended that “offline” be the default setting for Facebook chat.

Twitter

- Be careful what is posted and consider the ways in which it can be misinterpreted.
- Ensure that care is taken when ‘following’ others.
- Do not post negative comments about people or organisations.

Instant Messaging (MSN, FB Chat, SnapChat, Google Chat, etc.)

- All youth influencers are to avoid online personal chat with a young person where possible. It is preferable to move the conversation to another form.
- If a youth influencer and a young person use instant messaging make sure that the conversation is recorded or saved.
- If a conversation is occurring in an instant messaging application then invite a third person to join the conversation.

Video Chat (mobile phone or internet etc)

Video chat can include, but is not limited to, Google Chat, Skype or any other applications that allow personal conversation via video form. Youth influencers should not be entering into any conversations of this nature with a young person.

Online behaviours expected from Youth

Expectations of online interaction by youth towards leaders should be made clear wherever possible, as soon as possible. Such expectations should include:

- Youth should not expect or seek a particularly deep or active online relationship with a leader.
- The youth should not seek to communicate at-length with a leader in an online setting: long conversations, especially those of a personal or sensitive nature are always best to be had in another form.

- The youth should not seek to embarrass, defame, or implicate the leader by online means in any inappropriate or illegal activity. Youth and leaders are always to be respectful of one another online.
- Youth should be aware that posts and interactions they make online may be seen by leaders, who then may have a responsibility to report them or take other action as a result.
- Social media friendship should not be taken as a sign of particular preference or special relationship between youth and leaders. It is inappropriate for youth to seek such relationships with leaders.

Reporting Concerning online Behaviours

If concerning information is encountered regarding St. Jude's youth or friends of St Jude's youth, then advice from the Children and Youth Minister must be sought. If a leader encounters information that requires immediate attention (ie. the youth(s) are at immediate risk of coming to harm), action should be taken by the leader in accordance with ChildSafe protocol. Where appropriate, leaders should inform the parents/guardians.

What should leaders do if youth are attempting to develop a close relationship with a leader?

Inform the Children and Youth Minister immediately, even if the interaction may only have been misconstrued by the leader. Whenever suspicion arises, inform the Children and Youth Minister, proceed with caution. If applicable, inform the parents/guardians of the youth.

Where interactions are a clear attempt by the youth to develop a close relationship, the leader should cease online communication. It should be made clear to the youth in question as soon as possible that this change is not because of a change in their relationship or standing with the leader—all effort should be made to explain that this change is not a rejection of the youth—rather the change is because the level of interaction has become inappropriate. A relationship with a leader of the type the youth is seeking is not an option, but this does not mean that the leader does not or no longer cares about the youth. Inform the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the youth.

Leaders should always be cautious and thoughtful about the type and level of interaction they have with youth, both on and offline. Prevention of situations where leaders' words or actions could easily be misconstrued by youth is paramount. If necessary, boundaries of appropriate interaction between leaders and youth should be clearly stated early-on in order to avoid misunderstanding later. This is especially important for relationships between leaders and youth of different genders.

Photographs

- Before taking photographs, check that everyone knows where these photographs will be posted and that permission has been given.
- In particular, before taking a photograph of a minor make sure that the minor and parents have given permission (refer to appendix for parent permission form).
- At a specific gathering, any photographs of young people should be taken by someone appointed to do so.
- Photographs should focus on the activity rather than on particular people or individuals.
- Do not identify in writing the person/s in the photograph.
- Do not take or post inappropriate photographs.

Gaming Consoles

Xbox, PlayStation and other gaming consoles (including computers) have games that allow communication across the Internet usually through text and voice chat.

- Youth influencers should avoid 'chatting' to others playing the same game as they are, particularly if a known young person is also playing the game.
- Do not initiate chat to other young people within the game.
- Make sure that the parents know that their children are playing a game across the Internet with a 'youth influencer'. At all times obey and follow the parents' instructions.
-

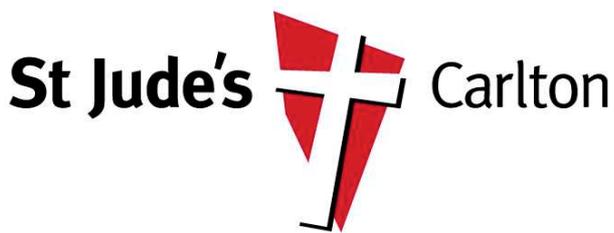
Updates

Version	Date	Description of changes
01	Mar 2015	Prepared by Wayne Rice (Vicar's Warden)
Update02	May 2015	Wayne Rice & Kate Boughton (Children and Youth Minister)
Update03	May 2017	Wayne Rice

Responsibility

Children and Youth Minister, Vicar
Vicar's Warden

Appendix A – Registration Form for under 18 year olds



Registration Form¹ for under 18 year olds

This form is intended to assist St Jude's children's ministry leaders (1) to plan appropriate programmes, (2) to keep parents/guardians informed about our activities, and also (3) to act appropriately in case of a medical emergency during participation in any children's ministry activity. Please complete ONE FORM PER CHILD and return to Children and Youth Minister as soon as possible.

Registration Details:

Child's Name: _____

Parents'/Guardians' Name/s: _____

Child's Gender: ___M___F___ Date of Birth: ___/___/___

Phone: _____ Mobile 1 (preferred?): _____ Mobile 2: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

email 1 (preferred?): _____ email 2: _____

Current School Year: _____

What school does he/she attend? _____

St Jude's Children's Programme Permission:

This form is to be filled out by the parent/guardian of the participant

I consent to my child's participation in St Jude's Children's programmes during Sunday services, playgroup, camps, conferences and such other St Jude's events as he or she may attend from time to time. I will encourage my child to participate and co-operate with the leaders and other participants. I agree to collect my child promptly at the end of the programme, and acknowledge that supervision of my child is my responsibility before the programme commences, and after it is concluded.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

(Parent/Guardian)

*Always write in ink; sign and date documentation including alteration;
do not use correction fluid to alter any documentation but draw a line through the incorrect area; initial and date alterations made.*

¹ This form is based on the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne Children and Youth Ministry Team's publication, 'Duty of Care, A Shared Responsibility; Handbook for Leaders of Children and Youth Ministry,' revised June 2005: Appendix C 'Medical Information/Consent Form In Children or Youth Ministry in Anglican Parishes in the Diocese of Melbourne'. The original form may be viewed at http://www.melbourne.anglican.com.au/crossgenerations/pdfs/care_appendices.pdf

Photograph Permission:

I understand that from time to time photographs and/or video footage may be taken of my child during St Jude's children's programmes and other activities. I am willing for images of my child to be so recorded in appropriate settings. I am also willing for recognisable photographs or footage of my child to be used as indicated below, in a way that does not identify their name or details. My child is also willing for this to take place. I am aware that St Jude's will use such photographs and/or video footage in good judgement in accordance with my permission, and that I have the right to revoke this permission at any time.

I consent to recognisable photographs and/or video footage of my child being used in the following manner:

- displayed on public noticeboards within St Jude's church building
 - for St Jude's 'in-house' publicity - including printed and projected images (for example, to advertise a camp or programme)
 - in the context of St Jude's children's programmes or St Jude's services - including printed and projected images (for example, to enhance a song, or present a drama)
 - in printed material for use external to St Jude's (for example, in Welcome Packs or publicity brochures)
 - on the St Jude's church website
 - I do not wish recognisable photographs or video footage of my child to be used by St Jude's in any context*
- *NB: If this box is ticked, our undertaking is that any photographic material of your child taken by our staff or children's ministry volunteers in the course of St Jude's crèche or other activities will be promptly destroyed.*

Parents'/Guardians' Name/s: _____

Signed: _____ Date: _____

(Parent/Guardian)

Medical Information:

Please tick if the child suffers from any of the following:

- | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Diabetes | <input type="checkbox"/> Dizzy Spells | <input type="checkbox"/> Heart Condition |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Low blood sugar (Hypoglycaemia) | <input type="checkbox"/> Blackouts | <input type="checkbox"/> Asthma |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fits of any type | <input type="checkbox"/> ADHD | <input type="checkbox"/> Migraines |
| Other _____ | _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Epilepsy |

Does the child have any known allergies, including drug or food allergies? Yes / No

If 'Yes' please list below or attach details _____

Does the child have any medical or other condition which may affect their participation in children's activities, or which requires special attention from the leaders (for example, recent illness or surgery, medication or food which is required at a particular time, phobias, developmental issues)? Yes/No

If 'Yes' please list below or attach details _____

St Jude's Youth E-Communication Code of Conduct

Background Information

At St Jude's we have a zero tolerance for child abuse and are committed to acting in children's best interests and keeping them safe from harm. St Jude's regards its child protection responsibilities as being of the utmost importance and so is committed to providing the necessary resources to ensure compliance with all relevant child protection laws and regulations and maintain a child safe culture. St Jude's is committed to supporting and upholding the Victorian Government's Child Safety Standards.

St Jude's Child Safe and E-Communication policies establish guidelines drawn from the Victorian Government legislation and the Parish Handbook of the Anglican Diocese of Melbourne. These guidelines aim to provide a safe environment for all, especially children and youth in our care. All those who work with children and youth are required to sign an acknowledgment that they agree to abide by St Jude's Child Safe and E-communication policies, the related codes of conduct and to actively promote a child safe culture at St Jude's.

Likewise, all youth who participate in St Jude's activities are expected to act and communicate respectfully and to respect the duty of care St Jude's leaders have for them. In particular, this means that if youth leaders are in anyway concerned about the welfare of youth in their care, then they will inform St Jude's Children and Youth Minister and the parents concerned.

St Jude's Youth E-Communication Code of Conduct

- I will at all times be courteous and use appropriate language
- I will not divulge personal details, including photographs, that could put anyone, including myself at risk
- I will respect the rights and privacy of others
- I agree not to seek or post unsuitable, offensive or illegal material
- I will not bully, harass or demean anyone
- I will let my youth leader know if I have concerns about the welfare of fellow youth
- I do not expect or seek a particularly deep or active online relationship with a youth leader
- I will not seek to communicate at-length with a youth leader in an online setting. I acknowledge that long conversations, especially those of a personal or sensitive nature are always best to be had in another form
- I will not seek to embarrass, defame, or implicate a youth leader by online means in any inappropriate or illegal activity
- I am aware that posts and interactions I make online may be seen by leaders, who then may have a responsibility to report them or take other action as a result
- I am aware that social media friendship should not be taken as a sign of particular preference or special relationship between youth and leaders. I acknowledge that it is inappropriate for youth to seek such relationships with leaders

I have read the St Jude's Youth E-Communication Code of Conduct and agree to abide by the code.

Youth Name:

Signature

Parent/Guardian Name:

Signature

Date:

Please make a copy and return to your Youth Leader