



Anglican Diocese of Gippsland

COMMUNICATION POLICY

INTRODUCTION

Communication in its many forms is essential for sharing and providing information to and between church members as well as the broader community. Communication should be timely, appropriate and related to church matters only.

In preparing communications, consideration should be given to the positional power dynamic that exists between those in leadership and vulnerable people who take part in church programs.

The increased use of electronic media for communications also increases the risk of privacy breaches and unlawful behaviour associated with discriminatory and abusive comments.

SCOPE

This policy covers all forms of communication including verbal, written, electronic communication such as websites, text messages, email, video call, social media and photographs with and between church members. Restrictions and guidelines are in place to govern all electronic communication with children.

The *Communication Policy* applies to all church leaders/workers, parish members and volunteers.

STATEMENT OF INTENTION

The intention of this Policy is to:

1. Maintain integrity and safety of all church members, the Diocese and parish organisations, by establishing clear boundaries in communication, particularly in interactions with children and vulnerable people.
2. Provide a level of consistency and safety in all communications ensuring communication is aligned to the values of the Church and safe church practices..
3. Encourage relevant, lawful, appropriate and respectful information sharing.

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

We will not knowingly transmit, retrieve or store any communication that is:

- Discriminatory, harassing, or racist
- Derogatory to any individual or group
- Obscene, sexually explicit or pornographic
- Defamatory or threatening
- In breach of an individual's right to privacy
- In violation of any licence governing the use of software; for any purpose that is illegal or contrary to our code of conduct – *Faithfulness in Service*
- In breach of copyright or intellectual property law.

Church leadership will:

- Use a range of electronic tools to communicate in means consistent with the Electronic Communication Guidelines.
- Ensure all communication protects members' privacy, maintains clear boundaries and ensures that bullying, harassment, exploitation of vulnerable people doesn't occur.
- Encourage people in leadership roles within the church to oversee electronic communication where practical, to ensure no offensive content or photos will be published.
- Not tolerate abusive, racist, discriminatory, intimidating or offensive statements..
- Report any inappropriate use of electronic communications to the Director of Professional Standards.
- Encourage family-friendly and positive content in all public and member communication
- Seek feedback from church members to improve our communication processes.
- Commit to children, families and communities being involved and informed.

We expect members to use appropriate communication when sharing information with other members or posting material on the internet or public websites related to church matters or events. Remember, that all social media – comments, tagging and sharing - is a public comment.

NON-COMPLIANCE

Church leaders/workers, parish members and volunteers may face disciplinary action for sending or storing inappropriate electronic communication or posting online content and comments that is unlawful or in any way contrary to this policy or the Code of Conduct –*Faithfulness in Service*.

Where a criminal offence is believed to have occurred via electronic communication, the matter will be reported to the police.

Acknowledgement

These guidelines are an adaption of the Professional Standards Unit of the Anglican Church Dioceses of Bendigo and Sydney. We thank them for their work in this area and their willingness to share it with the wider church.

Disclaimer

This is not legal advice but rather good practice advice for holistic Safe Church ministry. If you are concerned about legal issues you are advised to seek your own legal opinion.

Policy Scope

These guidelines apply to all Church leaders/workers, parish members and volunteers associated with ministry in our church. The guidelines should be read in conjunction with other Diocesan policies designed to embed Safe Church Ministry:

- Communications Policy
- Privacy Policy
- Safe Church Policy
- Child safety & Wellbeing policy.
- Faithfulness In Service

Policy Responsibility

The Diocesan Corporation (ADG Admin Ltd) is responsible for the implementation and review of these guidelines.

Approved by Bishop in Council 2023