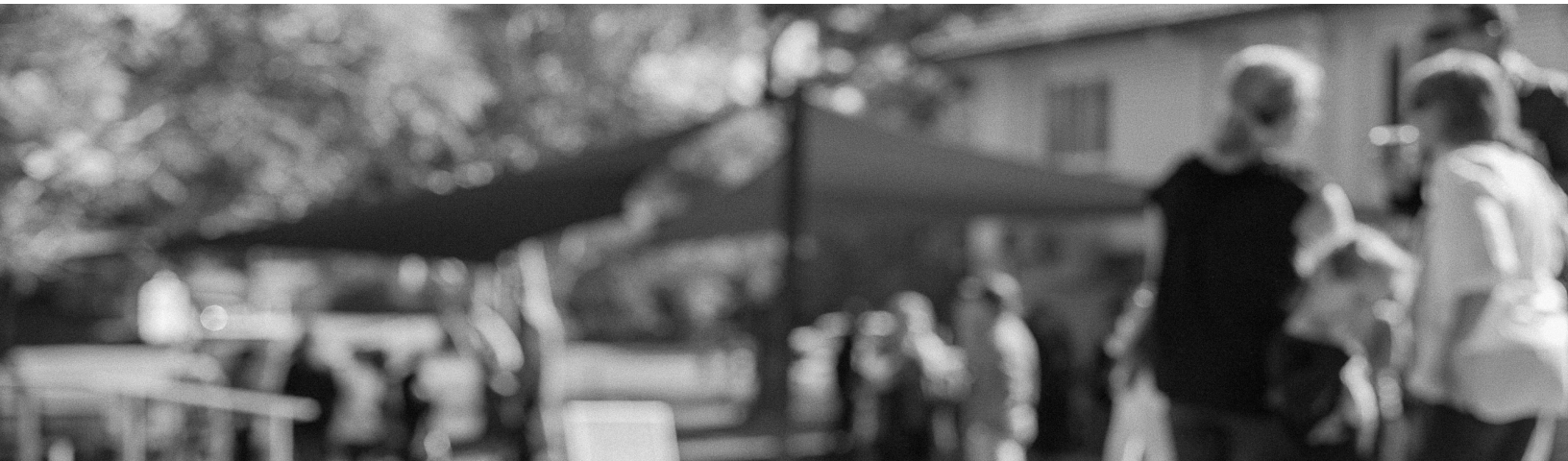
eastside community church

SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES

EASTSIDE COMMUNITY CHURCH



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GENERAL ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION GUIDELINES

1. Interaction with children/young people in these forms should be kept to a minimum.

2. Safe ministry is about ministering in teams, therefore interaction with children in electronic forms should only be carried out in a team context. Communicating with young people within a group setting through all forms of social media and electronic forms is a good and proffered practice as far as possible. (Any personal emails sent from a team member to a child/young person should also be CC'd to the team leader or coordinator, but should be kept to an absolute minimum).

3. Communication with children through any electronic communication can only take place if prior permission has been granted by a parent/guardian through the child registration form.

4. All team members must not knowingly transmit, retrieve or store any communication that is:

    - Discriminatory or harassing
    - Derogatory to any individual or group
    - Obscene, sexually explicit or pornographic
    - Defamatory or threatening
    - In violation of any license governing use of software
    - For any purpose that is illegal or in contradiction to your code of conduct

5. Team members must not send any electronic communication that attempts to hide the identity of the sender or represent the sender as someone else.

6. Pastoral Care or deeper conversations with children should be face-to-face.

TELEPHONE COMMUNICATION

7. When phoning a child, call on the home phone if possible.

8. Whenever possible ensure that the parents/guardians are aware of the phone call, e.g. phone the parents and ask if it is ok to speak with their child.

9. Mobile phone use should be kept to a minimum and never be used for long calls, especially for pastoral care:

    If a child initiates a mobile phone call requiring a long conversation, at an appropriate time transfer the call to the home phone line.

EMAIL COMMUNICATION

10. All emails to children should have a church email address carbon copied into them. Note: As carbon copying the church address into youth emails will clog up that mail box, the staff may wish to create a special purpose address for leaders to cc into their email.

11. Emails should generally be restricted to purpose only emails e.g. “meet at this place” or general conversations e.g. “how was the excursion today?” Pastoral care/ deeper conversations regarding more personal issues should be face to face.

12. As far as possible save all emails to and from children in a separate folder.

SMS COMMUNICATION

13. SMS communication should generally be restricted to purpose only communication e.g. ”meet at this place, at this time”.

14. If a longer SMS conversation begins, phone the child, preferably on the home phone.

15. Record or save text messages that you send or receive from a young person. This would include the content, time, date and the recipient/ sender.

SOCIAL MEDIA COMMUNICATION

There are numerous social media tools that are now used. Below are numerous social media tools that young people more commonly use. The recommendations given in the “Facebook” section would also cover the majority of the other social media sites.

FACEBOOK

16. All team members should be very careful as to whom they interact with and what is on their profile.

17. Team members are not to actively seek to add young people as "friends", but it is OK to confirm positively if they are "friend requested". Current Facebook policy is for those aged 13+, we would recommend not accepting 'friend requests' from those aged under 13 as per Facebook policy.

18. Posting written comments, photos, or videos of a personal nature should be done with the utmost care. It is important to think through and understand how comments, photos, or videos may be seen by other people.

19. Posting on other people's profiles should be general and kept to a minimum, particularly with young people and only of a broad nature e.g. "Hey, hope you're having a good week, cya Sunday" or other light conversations. It is best to keep conversations public so other people can see what's going on.

20. When using Facebook Messenger, it is recommended that no private messages be sent and if messages are to be sent, they be purpose only and have at least one other team member in the conversation. If you receive a Facebook message, a quick reply message to move the conversation to either face to face or via telephone is recommended.

21. Comments to young people, whether on their profile or in comments, are to be kept to a minimum. They 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.

22. Do not post any private details of a young person on any other "wall", "profile" or "event".

23. It is recommended that "offline" be the default position of team members regarding Facebook chat.

24. Regarding "Photos" please see the "Photo" section.

25. Do not write negatively about other people or organisations.

26. Set an example of good behaviour, in verbal and visual form.

27. Do not publicly express anger, disappointment and other such emotions when posting. As gratifying as it may be Facebook is not the place to do this.

28. Keep a close eye on the ever-changing privacy settings.

TWITTER

On one hand Twitter is more private than Facebook. It does not enable an overabundance of photos, it requires short posts, and the content is mainly driven by the user rather than others. In this case the following advice is recommended.

29. Team members are not to actively seek to follow young people, but it is OK to confirm positively if a young person requests to follow them.

30. Be careful what one posts and the way in which it can be interpreted.

31. Ensure that care is taken with who you 'follow' due to people being able to see who it is and their posts on your profile.

32. Do not post negative comments about people or organisations.

INSTAGRAM

Instagram is a photo sharing tool that uploads photos to the internet and can instantly connect with other users via the use of a HASHTAG. Hashtags are used to collate photos from events or experiences in common.

33. Team members are not to actively seek to "follow" young people, but it is OK to confirm positively if they are requested to follow by a young person.

34. It is recommended for your particular ministry setting to create a specific Instagram account related to your ministry.

35. Privacy settings are in place to screen comments and who is added as a follower.

36. Be mindful that when creating a hashtag and what public posts and photos may be associated and linked with that particular hashtag.

37. Photos of children can only be posted on social media for promotional material, if a parent/guardian has given permission through the child registration form.

38. In the instance of a personal Instagram account being used, it is required that you adhere to the guidelines around Photography.

SNAPCHAT

Snapchat is a photo- and video-sharing app enabling the user to determine the length of time a video or image will be viewed for.

39. Team members are not to actively seek to add young people as "friends", but it is OK to confirm positively if they are "friend requested".

40. It is recommended that where a Snapchat account is required you use a Church/ Ministry specific account to communicate with those using this app.

41. Don't add people back. If you don't have any friends, they cannot send you any snaps.

42. Change your settings to: WHO CAN –> Send Me Snaps – Friends & View My Story – Everyone.

43. Use the My Story feature to share with everyone who has added you.

INSTANT MESSAGING (Facebook Messenger, iMessage, Google Chat etc)

44. All team members are to avoid personal chat with a young person where possible. It is preferable to move the conversation to another form.

45. If a team member and a young person use instant messaging make sure that it is possible to record or save the conversation somewhere.

46. If a conversation is occurring in an instant messaging application then inviting another team member into it is highly advisable.

VIDEO PHONING (mobile phone/internet, FaceTime, Skype etc)

47. Team members should not enter into conversations of this nature with children.

BLOGS (Tumblr, Wordpress, Blogger etc)

Blogs are now a common form of expressing personal ideas and thoughts to the world. All team members are to be aware of what they express on their blog, whether it is personal or not. Like much of the previous advice continue to be diligent and conscious of the impression that your blog will give to those who read it.

PHOTOGRAPHY

48. Any photos of youth/children's ministry activities should be taken by someone appointed by the church and with parental consent.
49. Do not photograph any child who has asked not to be photographed.
50. Photography should focus on the activity and not on a particular child.
51. Photos should focus on small groups rather than individuals.
52. Do not identify in writing the person/s in the photograph.
53. All children must be appropriately dressed when photographed.
54. Do not take photos of children with your personal mobile phone.