

## **Social media policy**

In our Youth and Children's ministry, we are committed to partnering with parents in sharing, teaching and caring for the spiritual life of the youth in our church community. We see Youth and Children's ministry as a vital aspect of our church life. As we take seriously the leadership of teaching our youth, we want to ensure that our youth are a part of a safe environment that cares for their well-being and spiritual growth.

For most children and young people in society today electronic communications are part of daily life, therefore we are committed to maintaining healthy communications online and in person, which continue practising our safe ministry principles.

Outlined below are steps which we at St. David's take to follow safe ministry practices online.

### **Communication:**

#### **Children:**

- Communications should always be above reproach, both in terms of content and the way you communicate.
- Leaders should not be in direct contact with children in any form E.g., Email, social media, phone calls or texts.
- All electronic communication should be made with the child's parent or guardian. On a rare occasion, should you need to speak with a child, contact must be made through the parent or guardian. Conversations should always be kept short.

#### **Youth :**

- Communications should always be above reproach, both in terms of content and the way you communicate.
- Face to face interactions are the best way to build relationships with youth. Do not use electronic communications for pastorally sensitive matters or emotionally charged conversations. Always seek to meet up for these types of conversations and if initiated by youth ask if you can meet in person.
- All communication needs to be transparent.
- Conversations should never be secretive or exclusive. Aim to keep communications public and brief.
- Look to include other leaders in the communication and wherever possible seek to communicate in groups rather than individuals.
- Always keep a record of any emails, text messages or conversation threads with youth.
- Do not initiate social media friendships, though you might choose to accept if they initiate.
- Do not accept any primary aged children on any form of social media.

## Guidelines on the forms and ways to communicate with youth aged children:

Type of contact	Years 7–9 Students	Years 10–12 Students
Phonecalls	To be avoided. Preferable to speak with the parent first and ask permission to speak with the young person.	Reasonable phone contact for ministry purposes permissible. Long conversations to be avoided.
Text messages	For logistical purposes only	For logistical purposes and encouragement
Email	For logistical purposes and encouragement only	For logistical purposes and encouragement
Social networking (Facebook, Instagram, etc)	Use your discretion and keep in mind the 10 key principles above.	Use your discretion and keep in mind the 10 key principles above.
Video calls/streaming and chat rooms	Never	Never

For further information, as to safety measures that should be considered refer to PSU Safe ministry for youth ministry leaders ( 5. G.) which include the 10 principles referred to in box above.

## Photographs and video footage:

- Leaders should not take photos of youth or children without parental permission.
- Photos should only be used for the intended purpose
- Photos should focus on groups of children as opposed to individuals
- Do not identify in writing on any social media platforms children's names.
- Images used for promotion must need parental permission
- All children must be appropriately dressed when photographed

## Social media promotional accounts:

- All content comes from an official church/youth ministry account.
- These accounts need to be one-way communication E.g. We must not add, follow or comment on any followers' accounts, especially on youths' accounts
- Caution needs to be considered with the use of any sites that delete posts, Images and comments.
- Multiple leaders need to have access to these accounts with passwords shared and common knowledge to the team.
- Any content containing youth or children need to have parental permission before being uploaded.
- Youth and leaders need to be appropriately dressed

In times and events in which we cannot meet together in person and no longer connect with our youth through our regular ministries, we will seek to connect with youth through new avenues, such as social media, video streaming and conferencing.

Outlined below are the steps we take for online youth ministry:

### Online streaming/ Instagram account:

- In planning to stream pre-recorded talks and opportunities to live stream, we need to ensure this comes from an official church/youth ministry account.
- These accounts need to be one-way communication e.g. We must not add, follow or comment on any followers' accounts.
- Caution needs to be considered with the use of any sites that delete posts, images and comments.
- Streaming times need to be made known to youth and parents. Streaming outside of these times is discouraged.

### **Bible studies and discussion groups:**

Bible studies and discussion groups that connect over zoom at a regular time:

- All zoom meetings need to be conducted through the official youth/church account.
- 2 adult youth leaders need to be present in each video conference call.
- If multiple bible studies meet at a time, they will split off into break out rooms sorted by the host.
- The Host can see what is happening in each breakout room and can join at any point (this covers having 2 leaders present).
- Leaders need to communicate with parents about the scheduled times of these meetings. Avoid meeting outside of these times.
- Leaders need to conduct all meetings in public spaces. Avoid bedrooms, closed rooms or places where others cannot overhear or walk past. Maintain respectful and appropriate conversations, observe appropriate dress codes.
- Leaders should never be alone in a chat room with just one youth and leaders should not be meeting with youth of the opposite gender.
- Where possible, invite others into video conferences and chats rather than conducting them one to one. If for some reason you cannot invite someone else to join, you must postpone or inform the head of the ministry.

### **Group chats/ Messenger/Instagram/Direct messages:**

- There should be no private contact or conversations with any youth in years 7-9. Any conversation with older youth needs to be recorded and never deleted. ( i.e., if necessary, need to be willing to show the head of the youth ministry). Only contact people of the same gender as you.
- **We understand some of our youth are also friends with the leaders, we need to ensure that we follow the same guidelines here with these relationships too.**
- If youth are sharing prayer points to a leader through messages, encourage them to share in more public forums such as group chats with 2 or more leaders. (If need be, add either another male or female youth leader (as appropriate)).
- Parents need to be aware of all forms of contact leaders make with their children.
- Youth in years 7-9 should be contacted through parents and information shared with them should also be shared with their parents.

All parents need to be contacted and informed about the ways and times in which you seek to get in contact with their children. Clear guidelines will be given to parents about ways in which we will stay connected with their children and leaders are discouraged to communicate in different ways, other than the ones outlined. **Apps such as Snap chat or where items can instantly disappear or be deleted, are not to be used with any youth.**

All leaders, parents and participants are encouraged to speak to head of youth ministry or the senior minister if there are any concerns or inappropriate behaviour by either leaders or ministry participants.

Leaders are encouraged to continue to connect with youth and keep in contact with them, ensuring they conduct themselves in a manner that seeks to be above reproach, transparent and seeks to ensure children and young people are always safe.