

Social Media Policy – St Philips Anglican Church South Turramurra

Rationale

Social media is a communication tool which, like all tools, can be used responsibly or irresponsibly. Responsible use of social media builds community. Irresponsible use of social media may be damaging to St Philips and members of the St Philips community. All members of St Philip's community have rights including the right to feel happy and safe at church, youth group and all activities run by and associated with St Philips South Turramurra. All have a right to have the privacy of their personal information respected. St Philips as a member of the Anglican Diocese of Sydney also has rights associated with its good reputation.

Social Media is an important communication medium for young people and provides us with valuable opportunities to engage with this generation online. Websites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube provide a fantastic tool for St Philip's Anglican Church South Turramurra to reach more children through our ministries, encourage them to trust Jesus, and disciple them.

However, inappropriate use of Social Media can also result in significant damage to the reputation of St Philip's and its volunteers and staff. This policy describes the responsible use of social media by St Philip's and their volunteers, leaders and staff with the aim of protecting them and minimising the risk of damaging St Philip's reputation and thereby minimising the risk of damaging its ministry opportunities.

St Philip's recognizes the importance of its staff and volunteer leaders using social media and helping to shape industry conversation and direction through involvement in social media. St Philip's therefore encourages its leaders and employees to interact knowledgeably, socially and responsibly on social media sites and the Internet.

The following Code of Conduct has been established to ensure that all St Philip's leaders and employees are careful and understand their responsibilities when participating in social media. No policy can lay down rules to cover every possible situation. Instead, it is designed to express St Philip's objectives and set forth general principles when using social media in accordance with communication guidelines established by the diocese.

See: <https://safeministry.org.au/for-parishes/safe-ministry-journey/safe-ministry-signpost/parents-and-church-members/>

Policy objectives

1. This policy has been created to:
 - a) Encourage responsible use of social media
 - b) Set standards of behavior regarding social media use which are consistent with Christian values and those of St Philips Anglican Church South Turramurra including respect for a person's rights to privacy, to feel safe and to maintain their good reputation

c) To safeguard St Philips and individuals from unknowingly breaching criminal or general laws relating to: negligence, privacy, indecent behaviour, misuse of a means of communication, misleading conduct, copyright or defamation.

Policy scope

2. This Policy applies to social media use at St Philips and activities associated with St Philips Anglican Church South Turrumurra church devices or personal devices. It is specifically for staff, lay leaders and volunteers but has a wider implication for those attending St Philips and participating in its programs and activities. It complies with the diocesan Safe Ministry guidelines (Appendix A)

3. To the extent that St Philip's duty of care for all its members and those attending church, youth and other activities associated with St Philips extends beyond the church premises and Sunday and mid-week activities, St Philips may have a legitimate interest in the use of social media use outside these specific times on a personal device.

4. For the purpose of this Policy, social media includes all forms of electronic communication enabling users to create and share content, participate in social networking or otherwise create online communities.

Policy statement

5. General Provisions

- a. Whilst volunteer leaders and employees may comment about St Philip's related activities on existing social networks, they are not authorised to speak on behalf of St Philip's to official media agencies (e.g. news media) without the prior permission of the Senior Minister.
- b. Employees and leaders are not to set up a specifically St Philip's related group or page on any social media without the express permission of the Senior Minister.
- c. Comments posted on St Philip's public social media pages, including negative comments, are not to be removed without the permission of the Senior Minister, or in his absence, the Office Administrator
- d. Recognizing the age range of its community St Philips supports the use of age appropriate social media.
- e. Written, graphic, audio and other materials created, produced, communicated, stored or accessed on St Philips computers, website or social media sites are subject to monitoring by the church staff. Such materials created or distributed using St Philip's devices or networks are the property of St Philip's Anglican Church South Turrumurra.

6. Access to Employee Communications.

- a. St Philip's reserves the right to routinely monitor electronic activities and leader/employee communications directly (e.g. work emails, social media posts on any

public pages, etc.) for reasons involving cost management and resources allocation. This monitoring also helps to detect patterns of use that may indicate that leaders/employees are violating company policies or engaging in illegal activity. St Philip's does this in line with the provisions in the Workplace Surveillance Act 2005 (NSW).

- b. St Philip's reserves the right, at its discretion, to review any leader's or employee's electronic files and messages to the extent necessary to ensure electronic media and services are being used in compliance with the law, this policy and other company policies.
- c. Employees or leaders should not assume electronic communications are completely private. Accordingly, if they have sensitive information to transmit, they should use other means.

General Provisions for Use

- **Confidentiality:** You may not share information that is confidential and proprietary about the organisation, employees, volunteers, leaders, parishioners or children.
- **Privacy:** Privacy settings on social media platforms should be set to allow anyone to see profile information similar to what would be on the St Philip's website. It is important to be mindful of your own personal privacy as well and not post any personal information that you do not want to be publicly available. You also need to consider the privacy rights of other employees, volunteers, parishioners and children. Seek their permission when writing about or displaying internal program or church activities which may be considered a breach of their privacy and confidentiality.
- **Identification:** When participating in social media forums about a topic relevant to St Philip's, identify yourself and your employment or relationship to St Philip's and state that the opinions expressed are your own, not representative of St Philip's. Do not post blogs, comments or other postings that attempt to hide your identity or represent yourself as someone else. Do not use pseudonyms, false screen names or anonymous postings. Be honest about who you are.
- **Honesty & Accuracy:** Do not say anything that is dishonest, untrue or misleading. Strive for accuracy and get the facts straight before posting them on social media. You should not make any statements that are contradictory or in conflict with information published by St Philip's. If you see misrepresentations made about St Philip's you may respond with respect and with the facts but avoid arguments. Please advise the Senior Minister of this misrepresentation before responding. If you make an error, correct the posting and remove it as soon as possible (or contact the Office Administrator to make the correction).
- **Conflict:** You may not use social media to sell or promote any service that would compete or be in conflict with any of St Philip's programs or services.
- **Respect:** St Philip's requires that you show proper respect for the Anglican Church at South Turrumurra, employees, volunteers, parishioners, partners and other Christian churches, especially those in our suburb and neighboring suburbs.
- **Fair Use:** St Philip's allows its employees and leaders to participate in social networking under the guidelines of this policy; however, all employees or leaders are expected to respect the organisation's time whilst at work and not allow themselves to become

excessively distracted from their expected duties. Employees or leaders are reminded that their use of technology is monitored, and as such, excessive use of social media for personal use whilst at work will be detected and addressed as appropriate.

Breach Provisions

Any ministry volunteer or leader or employee of St Philip's Anglican Church South Turrumurra who breaches the Policy or abuses the privilege of their access to social media websites in violation of this policy will be subject to appropriate action which may include rights to use the St Philip's social media and technology resources being restricted or withdrawn.

For serious matters involving breaches of the law, St Philip's is obliged to inform the police or other regulatory bodies.

Appendix A – Safe Ministry Guidelines on Communication

CHILDREN'S LEADERS

Leaders should not contact children by email, mail, social media, video calls, using chatrooms or by any other form of electronic communication. Leaders should not call or text a child on the child's mobile phone.

All electronic communication must be with the child's parent or guardian. On the rare occasions when a leader might need to speak to a child on the phone for ministry purposes, the leader is to call the child's parent to explain why he or she is calling. Only then, with the parent's permission, should the leader speak with the child. The leader should be conscious of keeping the conversation with the child short.

YOUTH LEADERS

Leaders are to be guided by the following principles in their communication with youth –

ABOVE REPROACH

Communications should always be above reproach, both in terms of the content and the way you communicate. Ask yourself: if this communication were to be made known to all of church, would they consider it to be appropriate? Be sensitive to the impact of the words and images you use, to avoid offence or miscommunication. Never use flirtatious, sexually suggestive, explicit or offensive language or images. Be conscious too of how things might look. Be careful that the circumstances of your communication do not suggest that your relationship with a young person is inappropriate by, for example, communicating regularly or late at night. Even if your motives are pure, misunderstandings can arise.

IN PERSON IS BEST

Face-to-face interactions are the best way to build relationships with youth. Don't use electronic communications for matters that are pastorally sensitive, emotionally charged or that require a back-and-forth conversation. In those cases, it's much better to have a conversation in person. If a young person initiates a pastoral conversation with you using electronic communications, ask them if you can talk in person with them about it next time you see them.

BE TRANSPARENT

Be aware that those who wish to abuse young people may try to cultivate secretive or exclusive relationships through electronic communications. That is why it is so important to be transparent in all your communications. Aim to keep communications public and brief. Long or intense conversations by electronic means should be avoided. If a young person initiates a conversation like that with you electronically, consider how you might redirect it to a more transparent forum or include other people in the conversation. That might mean talking face to face or including another leader in the communication with the young person's permission. At the very least, you should let your ministry leader know so that nothing is going on in secret. You should also keep any emails, text messages or conversation threads with youth, in case an accusation is ever made against you or a misunderstanding arises.

DON'T INITIATE SOCIAL MEDIA FRIENDSHIPS

There is a power imbalance that exists between you and the youth you are ministering to. That power imbalance might make it difficult for them to say 'no' when you initiate a friendship on social media by, for example, sending a Facebook friend request or following them on Instagram. For that reason, it is best not to initiate, though you might choose to accept if they initiate.

SAFETY IN NUMBERS

Wherever possible, communicate electronically with groups rather than individuals. The best practice when sending emails or text messages is to include multiple youth or another leader in the message. If you're using social media for ministry purposes, use closed groups where possible (for example, Facebook) and direct young people to the group rather than your individual account if you can.

BUILD UP THE CHURCH

If you are posting on social media, think carefully about the impact of what you communicate on the entire church community (including children, youth and the vulnerable). Remember that if you are a leader, people may see you as representing the church. Consider how you can build up the church community, and avoid being divisive, showing favouritism or making others feel excluded or inferior.

RESPECT OTHERS

Be careful to observe confidentiality and privacy in electronic communications – for example, do not publish the names, contact details or other personal information of people online.

BE TRUTHFUL

Don't ever hide your identity or pretend to be someone else. Electronic communications that seek to hide the identity of the sender or represent the sender as someone else should not be used in ministry in any circumstances.

KNOW THE DIGITAL TERRAIN

If you're using social media, be aware of and comply with the terms of use, age restrictions, privacy options and controls for each site prior to using it in your ministry.

REPORTING ONLINE ABUSE

Laws regarding mandatory reporting of suspected abuse, neglect or exploitation of children and youth apply equally to the digital world.

USE YOUR COMMON SENSE!

There may be exceptional circumstances that arise from time to time, and common sense might dictate that you deviate from your usual practice when it comes to electronic communications. In those situations, be transparent and above reproach and, if possible, seek advice from your ministry leader.

Recommendations about the sort of contact that is likely to be appropriate at different ages:

Type of contact	Years 7–9 Students	Years 10–12 Students
Phone calls	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

Photographs/videos

Leaders should not take photos of children without parental consent.

Leaders should not photograph any child who has asked not to be photographed.

Photos of children should focus on small groups rather than individuals

Leaders should not identify in writing the person/s in the photograph, e.g. tagging on Facebook.

All children must be appropriately dressed when photographed (e.g. not in swimsuits or pyjamas).

Embarrassing or offensive photos or videos must not be either taken or shared.

Parental permission must be sought before posting photographs or videos of children online. Privacy is of utmost importance and care should be taken to protect children from having their personal information being displayed on a social networking site or Church website.

Generally, videos should only be used to showcase/advertise ministry-related events and activities.

When video of services or activities is distributed or streamed on the web or via other broadcast media, signs and/or notifications should be posted that indicate the service is being or will be broadcast.

Appendix B – Youth & Children’s Photography

When it comes to youth and children’s photos being used we must be increasingly careful. We have a duty to support and work with parents when it comes to youth and children’s privacy and security.

Through safe practices that will be outlined below, we wish to share memories on social media of our time spent at youth on Friday nights, Sunday mornings and evenings as well as special events (such as socials or camps). This is an easy way to work with and for the families that participate in our community. However, if anyone asks for us to take the photo down or cease distribution (if printed) we must do so as soon as possible.

The designated Media Co-ordinator will check (via ‘PCO’ or another data storage means deemed appropriate) if any youth in the photo are not allowed to be in published photos, regardless of intended internal or external use, before distributing the photographs.

This is to help ensure that we are providing the best practice for protecting any child who has been entrusted to our communities’ care.

We often want to take photos as part of life together, however the use and storage of these images must be carefully considered. In our current day and age, social media is becoming much more prevalent with children and youth than in previous years. We want to be a church that is connecting with our local community in ways that are relevant to today’s culture. For youth and children this now heavily involves social media. St Philip’s practices comply with the diocesan Safe Ministry guidelines (as above)

- **Permission:** Permission *must* be sought before photographs are used of *any* children or youth on site. Forms will be sent to parents/guardians of all children and youth involved in our community to seek this permission.
- **Data Storage:** Contact information (including permission for photographs to be taken and distributed) will be stored as deemed appropriate by the church. e.g. On PCO or other centralised storage means.
- An *appointed* leader should take photos of youth/children’s ministry activities. This leader will be appointed by the Children’s/Youth Minister and needs to have read and agreed to the terms of this policy.
- Photos will be saved in a secure location as soon as practical and kept secure. E.g. a secure offline system such as an external hard-drive kept in the office at St Philip’s. The photos will then be deleted from the designated leader’s camera or phone.

Guidelines

Taking Photographs

- Do not photograph any child/youth who has asked not to be photographed.
- Focus on small groups rather than individuals.
- All children/youth must be appropriately dressed when photographed.
- Embarrassing or possibly degrading photos must be deleted immediately.
- When using photos of children or youth in print or online –
- Seek written permission annually from parents/guardians (e.g. annual registration form) before posting photos of children/youth on the church website or social media.
- Avoid identifying the person/s in the photograph in hard copy publications.
- Do not tag youth in pictures online. (Youth will often tag themselves).
- Ministry leaders need to monitor St Philip's social media platforms to ensure photos and comments are appropriate.

Posting Online

Ensure any copy posted online is beyond reproach and cannot be misconstrued.

Ensure all photos and videos posted or tagged are beyond reproach and cannot be misconstrued.