

Social Media Policy

1 Introduction

Social networking sites, on-the-spot communication devices and email are an integral part of our society and culture. In our faith community, they can enhance communication, faith sharing and deepen relationships. The following recommended practices and guidelines apply commonly accepted principles of healthy boundaries and safe church (see also Safe Church Policy) to the virtual world of digital networking and communication.

1.1 Scope

This policy covers 3 types of social media:

1. Social Media networking sites and/or groups, such as Facebook, What's App group, YouTube Channels, etc..
2. Video Meetings, such as thru Zoom, Facetime, etc..
3. Emailing, Texting and Instant Messaging (through any Social media platform such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, etc..)

This policy should be considered in conjunction with the Safe Church policy.

1.2 General Information about Digital Communications

1. All communication sent digitally (e.g., email, social networking sites, notes or posts, texting) is NOT CONFIDENTIAL and may be shared or reposted to others beyond our control.
2. Interactions in the virtual world need to be transparent.
3. Adults should not initiate social media contact with children, youth and/or vulnerable adults without written permission from parents/guardians.
4. Laws regarding mandated reporting of suspected abuse/neglect/exploitation of children, youth, and vulnerable adults apply in the virtual world as they do in the physical world.

2 EZMC Internet and Wifi

1. EZMC has a wireless network.
2. This public connection is intended for the limited personal, non-commercial use.
3. EZMC's wireless connection is password protected. Individuals will be provided with the password as needed. The password is not shared publicly.
4. In providing this free wireless connection, EZMC may restrict access to certain sites considered to be illegal, malicious, or inappropriate.
5. EZMC does not guarantee the security of this wireless connection, participants use it at their own risk.

3 Publishing/Posting Photos (See Safe Church Policy)

4 Types of Social Media

4.1 Social Networking Sites and/or Groups

1. Any material on any site (whether affiliated with EZMC or not) that raises suspicion that a child, youth and/or vulnerable adult has been or will be abused/neglected/exploited must be immediately reported to Family and Children's Services or the Police (See safe church policy for procedures). If the material is on an EZMC affiliated site, that material will be documented for EZMC records and then removed from the site.
2. All inappropriate material on an EZMC affiliated site, will immediately be removed from the site.
3. Any content that details inappropriate behaviour (outside of the bounds of the established covenant} during an EZMC sponsored event or activity will be addressed by volunteer leaders.
4. Social networking groups for children, youth and vulnerable adults should be open to parents/guardians of current members.
5. Covenants must be created to govern what content is appropriate and inappropriate for any social media group created on behalf of EZMC.
6. All EZMC social media groups will be private. The administrator is responsible to invite and/or approve all members.

4.1.1 Covenant Content for Social Media Groups

1. Official EZMC social media groups will be set up and administered by a pastor or volunteer group leader.
2. All official EZMC social media groups must be approved in advance by the Safe Church Committee.
3. The Safe Church Committee is responsible to maintain a list of all EZMC social media groups and the name of the administrator of each group.
4. Material posted on EZMC affiliated sites (and/or group pages) is NOT CONFIDENTIAL. However, people's privacy must be respected.
5. Content deemed inappropriate will be removed from the site or group page.
6. All participants must use appropriate language, this includes: being kind and courteous, no hate speech, bullying or shaming.
7. It is not appropriate to post words or images that depict abuse, violence, sexual acts, etc.). As required, EZMC will report inappropriate content to FACS and/or the police.
8. When photos are posted on the site, people will only tag themselves, individuals will not tag other people.
9. Parents are responsible for the content of posts of children.
10. Each covenant will also identify the following, specific to the situation:

- Eligibility of membership to join a social networking group. Things to consider include whether you have to be part of the congregation and whether there are age requirements/restrictions for participation.
- Loss of eligibility of membership and removal from the social networking group. Consider how and when members will be removed from the group due to moving away, leaving the faith community, becoming too old for youth group, pastors leaving to minister elsewhere or exclusion from ministry positions for other reasons.

4.2 Video Chats or Meetings

1. Adults should refrain from initiating one-on-one text or video chats with children, youth and/or vulnerable adults.
2. For group video chats or meetings that are part of EZMC program for children, youth and/or vulnerable adults, the meeting host must be a screened volunteer. The same policies noted in the Safe Church policy apply to virtual events.
3. Meeting hosts should restrict private discussions (e.g., private text chat during video meeting) when that is an option on the platform being used.
4. Participants in a video chat/meeting should consider what will be shown in the video such as their surroundings, their clothing/state of dress, etc..

4.3 Email, Texting, and Instant Messaging

1. Email can be an appropriate and effective means of communicating basic factual information (e.g., time of event, agenda for meeting, text of a document). Email is not an appropriate communication method for matters that are pastorally or legally sensitive, emotionally charged or require extensive conversation.
2. When emails are sent to multiple people (e.g., girl's/boy's club participants and parents), recipients must be blind copied.
3. All emails to children (age 16 and under) must be copied to a parent/guardian.
4. Pastors and volunteers will not connect with children, youth and/or vulnerable adults by email, text or direct messaging thru a social media platform without signed permission from a parent/guardian.
5. Participants in youth activities and their parent/guardian will annually provide signed permission consenting to have youth leaders connect with the youth via email, texting and/or direct messaging.