 **Anglican Diocese of Gippsland**

**COMMUNICATION POLICY**

**INTRODUCTION**  
Communication in its many forms is essential for sharing and providing information to and between church members. Our communication will be timely, appropriate and related to church matters only.

We need to be very aware of the positional power dynamic that exists between those in leadership and vulnerable people who take part in church programs.

With the prevalent use and reliance on electronic media, the risk of breaches of personal privacy and unlawful behaviour is increased.

The Anglican Diocese of Gippsland has adopted a Safe Church Policy and a Child Safety & Wellbeing Policy that seek to protect those who interact with or take part in its activities.

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. 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.

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;
  + breaches 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 conduct code
  + breaches copyright or intellectual property law.

2. Provide a level of consistency and safety in all our communications ensuring communication is aligned to the values of the Church and Safe Church Ministry.

3. Encourage relevant. Lawful, appropriate and respectful information sharing.

**ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES**

Church leadership will:

* use a range of electronic tools to communicate with our members within electronic communication guidelines.
* ensure all our 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. In some instances, monitoring of electronic communication will occur on church related matters.
* Will report any inappropriate use of electronic communications to the Professional Standards Officer.
* Encourage family-friendly and positive content in all our public & member communication
* Seek feedback from church members to improve our communication processes.
* Commit to children, families and communities being involved and informed.

We expect our members to conduct themselves appropriately, especially when communicating in writing or using electronic communication to share information with other members or posting material on the internet or public websites related to church matters or events. Remember, that all social media is a public comment.

Written and Electronic communication:

* Should be restricted to church related matters
* Must not intimidate, humiliate or bully another person or cause unnecessary offence.
* Must not be misleading, false or injure the reputation of another person .
* Should respect and maintain privacy of members.
* Must not bring the Church into disrepute.

People who work with children and young people must seek written consent from parent or guardian every 12 months using the *Parental Consent Form* .

**NON-COMPLIANCE**

Church leaders/workers, parish members and volunteers may face disciplinary action for sending inappropriate electronic communication or posting online content and comments that is unlawful or in any way contrary to 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.

Adopted: October 2022

**Acknowledgement**

*This Policy is an adaption of the Professional Standards Unit of the Anglican Church Diocese of Bendigo. We thank them for their work in this area and their willingness to share it with the wider church.*