COMMUNICATION POLICY

Version: 1.1	Date of Issue: August 2015
Contact: Registrar	Review Date: August 2017

Introduction & Rationale

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 mindful 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 behavior is increased.

The Anglican Diocese of Bendigo has adopted a Safe Church Policy and seeks to protect those who interact with or take part in its activities.

STATEMENT OF INTENTION:

Our core communication policy intention is to:

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:
   o discriminatory or harassing;
   o derogatory to any individual or group
   o obscene, sexually explicit or pornographic;
   o defamatory or threatening;
   o breaches an individual's right to privacy
   o in violation of any licence governing the use of software; for any purpose that is illegal or contrary to our conduct code
   o breaches copyright or intellectual property law.

2. **Provide a level of consistency and safety** in all our communication 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.

- Abusive, discriminatory, intimidating or offensive statements will not be tolerated and may be removed or blocked. In some instances, monitoring of electronic communication will occur on church related matters.

- We will report any inappropriate use of electronic communications to the Professional Standards/Registrar.

- We encourage family-friendly and positive content in all our public & member communication

- We will seek feedback from church members to improve our communication processes

What we ask our members to do:

- 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 – Joys and Responsibilities and Faithfulness in Service.

Where a criminal offence is believed to have occurred via electronic communication, the matter should be reported to the police.

Policy Scope & Coverage:
All forms of communication including verbal, written, electronic communication such as websites, sms, email, 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.

Policy Responsibility

The Council of Diocese is responsible for the implementation and review of this policy.

Related documents and forms: Internal:
- Safe Church - Electronic Communication Guidelines
- Safe Church Policy
- Code of Conduct – Joys & Responsibilities/Faithfulness in Service
- Privacy Policy
- Parental/Guardian Consent Form
- Professional Standards reporting protocols

Related Documents: External
- Betrayal of Trust – State Government Victoria
  - Failure to Disclose offence
  - Failure to Protect offence
  - Grooming Offence
- Working with Children Checks – State Government Victoria