



REVISED SOCIAL CONTACT POLICY (2020)

The Main Principles

1. Safety in Numbers – multiple leaders should be present when engaging children/youth, and this should primarily occur with those of the same gender.
2. Responsibility – leaders are responsible for ensuring that their engagement with children/youth is above reproach, and that the appropriate people are being informed.
3. Transparency – it should be clear to both the other ministry leaders and the parents of why, when, and how children/youth are being engaged by leaders.

Social Media

1. Children and youth should be directed to the church or ministry group's official social media account when they initiate contact (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, etc).
2. These accounts should only be used in a one directional manner e.g. the church or ministry group account must not be used to add, follow, or comment on any follower's account. Responding to comments made by children/youth are allowed.
3. The information posted online should be limited to logistical purposes and basic encouragement.
4. There should be at least two designated leaders whose role it is to moderate each account for accountability.
5. Snapchat and other forms of social media that delete posts, images, and comments must not be used within any ministry of the church.
6. Leaders can use closed (not secret) Facebook groups. In this case:
 - The information posted on these groups should be for logistics, encouragement, and prayer.
 - There should be at least two designated leaders whose role it is to moderate the group for accountability.
 - The rector and the leader of that ministry should be informed of all groups.
 - Leaders should never have a group with students only of the opposite gender.
 - At least two designated leaders are required to moderate the group for accountability.
7. When a child or youth makes contact with a leader's personal account, strict guidelines should be followed:
 - Children/Youth should initiate friendships, following or adding to their account, not leaders. In such circumstances, the leader can accept their friend request.
 - Ensure any text posted online is beyond reproach and cannot be misconstrued.
 - Ensure all photos and videos posted or tagged are beyond reproach and cannot be misconstrued.
 - There should be no private contact or conversations with any child, or with any youth in years 7-9.
 - Leaders should not use a social media platform for leader to youth interactions that allows anonymity e.g. AskFM, KiK messenger etc.
 - Leaders should not use a social media platform for leader to youth interactions that deletes posts, images or comments (e.g. Snapchat).
 - Leaders should not use video calling for leader to youth interactions.

Video Conferencing

Under normal circumstances, video conferencing with children or youth is not allowed. However, under special circumstances this can occur once permission from the rector and the leader of that ministry has been sought. Nevertheless, it must be done with the following safeguards in place:

1. The church's video conferencing account is to be used to host the event.
2. Two adult leaders who have completed safe ministry and have a valid WWCC# must be present throughout the entire video conference. If breakout rooms are being utilized, then there must be two adult leaders who have completed safe ministry and have a valid WWCC# in each room.
3. Text chatting and any other means of direct communication with a leader must be disabled.
4. A permission note must be signed by a parent before any child/youth is allowed to participate.
5. A waiting room must be activated so that only the appropriate leaders and the permitted children/youth can enter the room, and to ensure that young people do not enter before both leaders are present.
6. Parents should be advised that the children/youth should be located in a common area of the house for safe ministry concerns, and be dressed appropriately when participating.
7. The entire video conference must be recorded, and then uploaded to a secure location for permanent storage. If for some reason chatting is not disabled (see pt. 3), the full chat log should be uploaded.
8. Only leaders should be able to share their desktop.
9. Wherever possible, virtual backgrounds should be disabled. Except when utilizing the white board, annotation should be disabled as well.
10. Wherever possible, leaders should not have a group with students only of the opposite gender. In the event that they do, the leaders should inform their ministry leader as soon as is practical to do so.

When Leaders Need to Initiate Contact with Children/Youth

- When seeking to contact children/youth, the leader should choose a means of communicating that enhances accountability.
- For youth, the best platform is to send a message through Facebook or WhatsApp with another ministry leader included in the correspondence. If this is unavailable, an alternative is to send an SMS to both the youth and another ministry leader.
- For children or youth in years 7-9, this is not always possible. In these cases, phone contact is permissible for ministry purposes only. It should be firstly with parents to explain the reason for the call and then, after permission has been sought, with the young person. The leader of the ministry should be notified afterwards of the conversation and that permission was obtained.
- For youth in years 10-12 only, if a leader wishes to have regular contact for encouragement, this is best done through Facebook Messenger or WhatsApp. The leader of that ministry and the parents should first be notified, and a second leader must be included in the correspondence.
- All correspondence between leaders and children/youth should never be deleted, but stored by the leader.

SMS, Email, & Messaging Platforms

When a child or youth contacts a leader via SMS, email, or another messaging platform:

- Contact of any kind should only be made with a child or youth of the same gender, except in the circumstances where a generic message is being sent out to a group of people.
- Responses should be limited to logistical purposes and basic encouragement.
- Another leader should be brought into the correspondence and included in all responses.
- The correspondence should never be deleted, but be stored by the leader.

Meeting in Person

- It is never appropriate to physically meet with children or youth socially without written or verbal permission from the parents as well as first discussing it with the leader of that ministry.
- The leader of the ministry should be informed that this permission has been gained, and when/where/with whom the meeting is occurring.
- When it does occur, it should be with same gender students or in mixed groups casually in public places (e.g. coffee at McDonalds).
- Leaders should never meet youth in their own homes. It is permissible to meet them in the youth's home but only if their parents agree to remain in the same space as well.

Phone Calls

Leaders should not give out their personal phone numbers to children or youth, and generally speaking phone conversations should be avoided. Nevertheless, in the circumstances where a youth attempts to contact a leader by phone:

- Written or verbal permission needs to be gained from a parent before the conversation takes place. This may mean calling the parent first and gaining this permission, before asking to be handed over to the child/youth.
- The leader of the ministry should be informed that this permission was/has been gained, and that the conversation is occurring.
- The conversation must only be for ministry purposes, and long conversations are to be avoided.

Photographs

We often want to take photos as part of life together, however, the use and storage of these images must be carefully considered:

1. An appointed leader should take photos of youth/children's ministry activities. Photos should be saved to a secure location as soon as practical and kept secure. The photos should then be deleted from the leader's camera or phone and any online storage e.g. the cloud.
2. Leaders should not be taking photos of children or youth during ministry activities for any reason other than official ministry purposes which have been clearly discussed with the leader of that ministry.
3. When taking photos:
 - 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.
 - Children/youth should only take photos of ministry leaders as part of a group.
4. When using photos of children or young people in print or online:
 - Seek written permission annually from parents/guardians (e.g. Registration form) before posting photos of children/youth on the church website or social media.
 - Parents should be made aware of what the photos/videos will be used for.
 - Avoid identifying the person/s in the photograph in physical publications.
 - Do not tag youth in pictures online. Youth will often tag themselves.
 - Ministry leaders need to monitor the Church's social media to ensure photos and comments are appropriate.