

# St. Paul's Digital Media Guidelines

## Need & Purpose of Document

The purpose of this document is to provide ministries and groups within St. Paul's with a set of guidelines and considerations when establishing digital communications between their members, the St. Paul's church community, and the world at large. These guidelines are not rules and regulations, nor does this document express formal church policy. This document is to serve solely as a resource to group leaders and participants.

The guidelines outlined within this document are specifically targeted toward the usage of online group communication services such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Web Blogs, Instagram, etc.

This document will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Communications Committee.

## Information about Digital Communications

St. Paul's Digital communications provides a valuable, inexpensive channel for communicating with the church and the broader community. Digital communications usage within the parish continues to grow and is a key way that we can show we are active in Cary and that all are welcome. There are several key digital channels St. Paul's uses, including Web, Facebook and Twitter. How we use, exploit and manage each of those channels will be important in furthering our message.

### Facebook Pages

Facebook pages enable public figures, businesses, organizations and other entities to create an authentic and public presence on Facebook. Facebook Pages are visible to everyone on the internet by default. Every person on Facebook, can connect with these Pages by becoming a fan and then receive their updates in their News Feed and interact with them. St. Paul's has several Facebook pages, including the St. Paul's Church page, Children's Ministry, and EYC. The Main page is considered the key page for communicating to the larger parish and world community.

### Facebook Groups

While Facebook Pages were designed to be the official profiles for entities, such as celebrities, brands or businesses, Facebook Groups are the place for small group communication and for people to share their common interests and express their opinion. Groups allow people to come together around a common cause, or activity in order to organize, express objectives, discuss issues, post photos, and share related content.

## Generally Applied Concepts

While each online service has its own risk factors, a general understanding of the following maxims will be greatly beneficial when considering the establishment of an electronic communications forum:

- **No information transmitted over the internet is truly private or temporary.** ALL information transmitted across the internet is stored in multiple places, and virtually forever. Even services that give the appearance of expiration (e.g. SnapChat) can be subject to information capture, simply by taking a screenshot of the phone or computer that received the message. Once a message is posted, there is no putting the genie back in the bottle.
- **The same expectations of safety and security that apply to physical meetings and communications within the church, also apply to online communications.** Just as the church facility should be a place safe from harassment, bullying, stalking, and confrontation; so to must be the online communities we establish be safe places. Online services need to be monitored by responsible parties and appropriate action taken as quickly as possible when the safety, privacy, and well-being of the participants is jeopardized. If the safety of the participants cannot be reasonably assured, then the online community cannot exist.
- **A greater sense of hospitality, goodwill, and friendliness is required by all participants when communicating online.** Unlike face-to-face communications, there is no ability to judge body language, expression, or context in electronic messages. Sarcasm, ‘playing devil’s advocate’ and ‘stirring the pot’ (also known as ‘trolling’) are not easily recognized in written text, and need to be avoided and actively discouraged.
- **Online communications should supplement, not supplant, other meetings, gatherings, and opportunities for fellowship.** We grow in faith by being together and becoming part of each other’s personal stories. Digital communications may only serve to separate us if it becomes the primary or only place of community gathering.
- **The statement ‘All are Welcome’ must also extend to digital communications.** We need to not only open our digital communications to all members of each ministry and group, but also be aware that digital access is still not accessible to a great many people.

## Guidelines and procedures for Church Sponsored Digital Media

- The purpose of church communications is to relay information about the parish to a broad or specific audience. It is intended to show how St. Paul’s is serving the parish and the larger community. It may also focus on attracting new members to the church.
- St. Paul’s Communications Committee and church staff have sole responsibility for editorial policies governing church communications.

- Church communications may not be used for partisan political messages or paid advertising.
- Only members of St. Paul's Communications Committee, Vestry, clergy, and staff shall maintain external communications channels on behalf of the parish.
- Only authorized St. Paul's spokespersons such as the Rector, staff, Vestry, or Communications Committee may coordinate communications with members of the media on behalf of the parish.
- Any external communication from a parish office regarding unexpected events or serious incidents must be approved by the Rector or Vestry, and follow diocesan guidelines.

### Social Media Channels used by St. Paul's

- St Paul's maintains a single website for communications with the Parish. Financial or sensitive information requires a login account. No other website shall be created to communicate to the parish in general.
- St. Paul's Facebook Page is used to communicate upcoming St. Paul's and Episcopal Church events and results of events. It will be monitored for comments and inappropriate comments will be removed promptly. Other St. Paul's Facebook pages need to have designated owners and post only specific items related to their target audience.
- St. Paul's Twitter Account should be used to communicate church news, upcoming events and items of interest to parishioners and the broader Cary Community. All St. Paul's Facebook posts are automatically tweeted. Currently most twitter followers are not members of St. Paul's.
- Any St. Paul's blogs need to be authorized by the Communications Committee, and be used as a place for parishioners to discuss what's happening at or their thoughts on St. Paul's. They may be Facebook Groups or external blogs. The Communications Committee will have a member monitoring any St. Paul's Blog and inappropriate comments will be removed.

It is acknowledged that anyone could create an impersonated Website, Facebook page or Twitter account called St. Paul's or related to St. Paul's. The Communication Committee needs to be aware of any such media and work to have unauthorized postings removed.

### Guidelines and Procedures for Ministry Sponsored Digital Media

Any and all St. Paul's ministries and groups contemplating the establishment of their own online communications forum (with the exception of email lists) are asked to contact the Communications Committee. The primary purpose of this contact is to give the Communications Committee an awareness of all communications mechanisms so that it they may be 'known' throughout the church as appropriate. In addition, it is also an opportunity for the Communications Committee to provide guidance and counsel; to assure that multiple

communications outlets are not overlapping or competing with each other; and to assure that each communications outlet serves the mission and vision of the church.

### Privacy Considerations and Guidelines

The following guidelines must be agreed to by any St. Paul's ministry or group desiring to establish its own social media.

- **Posting of Personal Information:** It is necessary to have permission to post or publish personal information, such as names, phone numbers, street addresses, or email addresses on media available to the general public.
- **Posting of Photos and Videos:** Print notices periodically in church bulletins or newsletters, informing members that the church occasionally uses photos of people and groups on the church website and that members objecting to the use of their photos (or photos of their children) should so inform the church office. A list can be maintained of persons who have requested that their photos not be used. This option provides "implied consent" to the use of members' photos.

### Specific guidelines for Interactions with Children and Youth

The following recommended practices and guidelines apply commonly accepted principles of healthy boundaries and safe church to the virtual world of digital networking and communication.

- All communication sent digitally is not confidential and must be available to be shared or reposted with others.
- Interactions in the virtual world need to be transparent, as a window in a door provides transparency in the physical world. In the virtual world healthy boundaries and safe church practices must be adhered to just as they are in the physical world.
- Parents must have access to everything provided to their children. For example, parents should be made aware of how social media are being used, be told how to access the sites, and be given the opportunity to be copied on all material sent to their children via social networking (including text messages). While parents should be provided with the same material as their children, it does not have to be via the same technology (that is, if children receive a reminder via Twitter, parents can receive it in a printed form or by an e-mail list).
- We strongly encourage the respect and dignity of every person depicted in an image. Only pictures depicting youth in an appropriate light should be posted. If a picture would make the youth feel self-conscious, vulnerable, or would subject the youth to ridicule, the picture should not be posted or promptly removed.

### Groups on Social Networking Sites

- Youth related groups should have at least two adult administrators. Closed groups, but not “hidden” groups, should be used for specific purposes (i.e., mission trips, Confirmation).
- Requests from youth to join a group should be approved by youth leaders. Open opt-in signups should not be allowed.
- Behavioral covenants should be created to govern what content is appropriate and inappropriate for an online youth group.
- Content deemed inappropriate should be removed from the site or group page as soon as possible. Appropriate and respectful language shall be used at all times, especially in regards to events and persons.
- Persons must be removed from the group for persisting in inappropriate postings or behavior.
- Social networking groups for youth should be open to parents of current members.
- Adult leaders of youth groups and former youth members who, due to departure, removal from position, or are no longer eligible because they “aged-out” of a program should be removed from digital communication with youth groups via social networking sites, list serves, etc.
- Sites must be monitored frequently to allow for quick responses in the event urgent or crisis concerns are posted.

### Children and Youth Identity Protection

- We will seek to protect the privacy and identity of all minors in our use of social media. For events that are for children, such as Youth Group, Vacation Bible School and Mission Trips, the registration forms should already include a notice of photography and or taping and require a signature from the parent for written consent. The Parish Administrator will keep a list of those families requesting that photos not be posted. This list will be shared with Children’s Ministries, Youth Ministry, and Music Ministry.
- All church leaders and adult volunteers engaged in ministry with minors must not post photos or video that identify children or youth by name on any online site or printed publication without the written consent from a parent or legal guardian.