



## COMMUNICATIONS PROTOCOLS

### Social Media & Digital Communication Best Practices

Southside Victory Church is committed to the well-being of every person who attends or visits the church. This commitment is reflected in our vision and purpose for SVC and the ministries which are part of the life of the church.

For the purposes of this policy, the term social media includes websites, interactive online accounts such as, but not limited to Facebook, Twitter, Google Plus, LinkedIn, and Pinterest, photo-sharing accounts such as, but not limited to Flickr and Picassa, video-sharing accounts such as YouTube, Livestream and Vimeo, online blogs and discussion forums.

The internet, portable devices, and digital technology offer important tools for fruitful ministry affording opportunities to connect with people within the congregation and community at large. As well, interested persons throughout the world to build networks for engagement, education and spiritual growth. These electronic tools also present some inherent risks when not used with care. Therefore, it is important that a communication policy outlines what tools will be used to communicate and how they will be used for safe ministry.

### Conduct of Staff and Volunteers

All staff and volunteers posting to any social media platform are expected to:

1. Be professional, responsible and respectful in all their communication
2. Refrain from posting any confidential and sensitive information, personnel issues, work conflicts or personal grievances
3. Only post what is public information, knowing that nothing posted is ever really lost or confidential
4. Keep messages affirming and edifying rather than combative or controversial



5. Recognize that they represent the congregation's ministry and ensure that posting are appropriate to the mission
6. Add their initials to posts made on a church account to which several persons have administrator status
7. If there is any question, uncertainty or concern about the proper nature of a post, consult with a supervisor or leadership of the church before posting
8. Provide their username and password for any church social media account to the office and/or system administrator. Refrain from giving the username and password to any unauthorized person.
9. Include a disclaimer on any personal sites as follows: *'The views and opinions expressed on this site are those of [person's name] and do not reflect the views and opinions of Southside Victory Church or Victory Churches International'* However, they should also remember that readers may not distinguish between official comments made in social media for work and comments posted on a personal page or site and therefore, that in some sense, they are always speaking for the church
10. Acknowledge that posts to the church's social media accounts are subject to the oversight of the Media Department and/or church leadership

## Conduct of Members of the Public Responding or Commenting to Posts on the Church's Social Media Sites

1. Readers are welcome to respond, either agreeing or disagreeing with a post, but are expected to be respectful of the opinions of others.
2. Those submitting a comment are wholly responsible for the content of their comments
3. Rants, rages, bashing, derogatory comments, profanity, comments that provoke discrimination or hatred of others, libelous or otherwise unlawful, abusive, immoral or obscene materials are not permitted and will be immediately removed from the site. If this is a repeated offence, the user will be blocked from the site.



4. Erroneous information will be addressed by a polite response giving accurate information in the comments.
5. If the posting is the result of an unhappy or negative experience, the site administrator may wish to rectify the situation and propose a reasonable solution. Depending on the nature of the 'complaint', this may be done in the comments or taken off-line.
6. Responses by the administrator to comments should take into consideration transparency, citing reputable sources, timeliness, and a professional and compassionate tone.
7. Corporate followers or 'friends' may be removed if their corporate identity is inconsistent with the values of Southside Victory Church and/or Victory Churches International
8. When members of the public are invited to comment or respond to a social media site (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, blog), the policies regarding their conduct should be communicated on the social media site.

Listed below are some helpful best practices for communicating and using social media for ministry with children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

## Privacy and Protection of Vulnerable Persons

1. Identifiable images of children should only be posted with the written consent of a parent or guardian
2. Do not identify the persons, other than staff and church leadership, in an image by name
3. Do not post the email addresses or phone numbers of persons, other than staff and church leadership, unless they have provided them for inquiries about a program or service.
4. When working with youth and young adults, remember that adults have more power in online relationships
5. Depending on the nature of the group, accept either all or none of 'friend' requests from youth
6. For discussion groups, set up a group account that all members of the group or congregation can join
7. Refrain from using a personal social media site to communicate with children and their families



8. Refrain from sending private messages to children and youth. Either copy their parents or post to their wall. Group emails are permissible, but parents should be copied on all such communications
9. Where personal information such as name, email address, and user name are collected as part of the sign-up process for an online community, this information will not be shared with other parts of the church or with any outside parties
10. When persons register for a program or an online community, they will be given the opportunity to indicate that they do not wish to receive communications unrelated to the program or online community
11. All online transactions will be completed using a secure, online billing process such as PayPal
12. Communications from the church sent via email should include specific instructions on how to unsubscribe from further emails

## Livestreaming of Services and Other Events

1. Signs will be posted at the entrances to the sanctuary indicating that the services are being livestreamed to the Internet. In addition, a slide could be included at the beginning of each program/service with this information.
2. Livestreamed services will remain archived on the Southside Church web page for one month and will then be downloaded and archived
3. Settings on the Livestream service should be set so that the services can normally only be viewed through the Southside Church website and may not be embedded into any other website.
4. Livestreaming should be preceded by a slide displaying the name and logo of the church, the title of the service or program and the date. It should commence with the official welcome from the Senior Pastor or designate.
5. Any children service or production should only be filmed from the back of the sanctuary without any closeups of the children.
6. Prior to taking or posting pictures or other comments digitally via e-mail, websites, or social media and prior



## Get permission

Prior to taking or posting pictures or other comments digitally via e-mail, websites, or social media and prior to sharing any contact information, all ministry leaders should make sure to have parental/guardian permission to take and post pictures, post, comment or tag children, youth and/or vulnerable adults, or share contact information. Staff and Volunteers who do not have immediate access to consent forms should check with staff person responsible for maintaining these records.

Written consent should be received for:

1. Taking and posting photos, messages, or videos for any use
2. E-mailing, Instant Messaging, calling, texting or sending data to a child, youth or vulnerable adult by computer, cell phone, or other digital technology
3. The sharing of any full name or contact information

## Decide what information you will share

Once you have written consent to communicate with children, youth, and/or vulnerable adults it is essential to discern what information you will communicate:

1. Move with caution when transmitting easily identifiable information like event dates, times, locations, or participants
2. Never post easily identifiable information online
3. Limit what is communicated in electronic prayer requests. When placing anyone on an electronic prayer list
  - a. Contact individual and ask for their consent to share via e-mail
  - b. Consider using only first names if posting online

## Post photos with care and intentionality

1. Churches/Organizations should have policies that limit or prohibit the use, publication, or public sharing of photos of children, youth, and/or vulnerable adults taken by personal cameras, cell



- phones, or video cameras of any kind on all personal websites, personal websites, personal blogs, social networking sites, and online photo albums
2. Photos of children, youth, and/or vulnerable adults who have appropriate photo releases from parents/guardians on file should only be uploaded to the ministry organization's moderated pages, website, or other designated forms of communication as stated in the photo release form and communicated to parents/guardians
  3. Designated leadership posting photos to authorized sites should refrain from using names and never use last names or identifiable information.
  4. Check photos for vulnerable/compromising situations and make sure they uphold the mission of SVC
  5. Block 'save photo as' options on websites
  6. Limit access to photos by employing the use of a password.

## Connecting via social networks and other digital apps

### General Guidelines

1. Set privacy settings to limit who can see your profile
2. Restrict who can be your friend. Use judgment and follow your church policy in accepting requests from children, youth or vulnerable adults with whom you are in ministry
3. Use high level security and strict privacy settings provided by social networking sites, making every effort to prevent participants from being introduced to objectionable content
4. All adult leaders engaged in ministry with children and youth should consider the content and nature of any posts that will be seen or read by others. Adult leaders should remember children, youth, and vulnerable adults look to them as role models and representatives of the church.
5. Do not post or share inappropriate comments, photos etc. Humor and sarcasm can be easily misinterpreted and should be used only where appropriate. Remember – all comments sent to a vulnerable person can be shared in a number of ways that misinterpretation of those comments may occur.



Southside  
Victory  
Church

6402 – 1A Street SW  
Calgary, Alberta T2H 0G6

Tel: 403-253-7777  
Fax: 403-258-4421  
info@southsidevictory.ca

6. Encourage children, youth, and vulnerable adults you are in ministry with to follow these guidelines too.

<http://victoriapresbytery.org/social-media-policy-draft/>