

Social Contact Policy

1. PREAMBLE

The purpose of this policy is to provide clarity around the appropriate use of social media, communication, and general social contact between church leaders and the children and youth that we lead.

While this policy is intended to give direction and clarity to church leadership, it is in effect a statement of principles, not a rigid set of rules. There may be times when exceptions will need to be made to this policy. The approval of Parish Council is needed to approve exceptions to this policy.

This policy ought to be read in conjunction with:

- (a) ***Faithfulness in Service:*** a national code for personal behaviour and the practice of pastoral ministry by clergy and church workers.
- (b) ***Safe Ministry Blueprints:*** guidelines aimed at ensuring greater awareness, transparency, and accountability within our churches and to help foster a culture of safe ministry at all levels of the church.¹ Where there are conflicts between the principles of this policy and those presented in the Safe Ministry Blueprints of the Anglican Church Diocese of Sydney and associated policies, the principles of the Crosslight Anglican Church policy prevail.
- (c) ***Annexure 1 –Guidelines for Ministry via Online Video Communication***

For the purposes of this policy the expression **children** relates to people of primary school age and below, and **youth** to people of high school age, except as noted.

2. SCOPE

This policy applies to all people who serve in ministry at Crosslight Anglican Church including;

- Ministry staff
- Ministry teams that include both adults and junior (youth) leaders/members
- People serving in teams in Children's and Youth Ministry
 - Kids Church
 - Kids Club
 - Mainly Music
 - Ignite
 - Youth Group
 - Discipleship Mentoring

¹ <https://safeministry.org.au/blueprints/>

3. SOCIAL CONTACT POLICY

We want to encourage healthy, appropriate, relationships with the children and young people we lead. Depending on the ministry group and the age of the children this can at times involve contacting them outside of the main ministry program and can include calling, talking online, and meeting in person.

While some conversations are private, it is important that relationships are transparent. Parents and church leaders should be aware of the relationships that exist between leaders and the children and youth even if, where appropriate, they are not aware of every specific conversation.

Listed below are the guidelines for social contact beyond the structures of the regular ministry program between:

- ministry team leaders and the children/youth in their program; and
- adult team leaders/members and junior team leaders/members (e.g. – Kids Church, Kids Club, Tech, Music etc)

(i) Primary School Students & Below

This section pertains to the following ministries – Kids Church, Kids Club, Ignite, Mainly Music, and Youth Group.

- Phone
 - Contact should be with parents only.
 - If the child answers the phone the leader should ask to speak to the parent.
 - Leaders should never contact a primary school student on their mobile phone.
- SMS
 - SMS can be sent to the parents or guardians for logistical purposes (e.g. event reminder).
 - Leaders should never SMS a primary student on their mobile phone.
- Email
 - Email can be sent to the parents or guardians for logistical purposes (e.g. event reminder).
 - Leaders should never email a primary school student directly.
- Social media
 - It is inappropriate to contact or talk with primary school students on any social networking site.
- It is never appropriate to meet primary school children socially unless it is in the context of socialising with the child's family.

(ii) High School Students

This section pertains to the following ministries – Youth Group, Discipleship Groups, and Ministry Teams.

CROSSLIGHT ANGLICAN CHURCH: LIVE FOR MORE. LIVE FOR JESUS

www.crosslightanglican.org.au

office@crosslightanglican.org.au

- Phone
 - Phone contact is permissible for ministry purposes; however, long conversations are to be avoided.
 - Where practicable and possible, the leader should speak to the parent first and explain the reason for the call.
- SMS
 - SMS should generally be limited to logistical purposes and encouragement (e.g. “praying for you today, don’t forget the event this week”, etc.) with a BCC/CC to the person the leader reports to for accountability, safekeeping, and future reference.
 - All other SMS (e.g. arranging discipleship meetings, follow-up, etc.) should be sent to the young person with a BCC/CC to their respective parent/s for accountability, safekeeping, and future reference.
- Email
 - Email should generally be limited to logistical purposes and encouragement (e.g. “praying for you today, don’t forget the event this week”, etc.) with a BCC/CC to the person he or she reports to for accountability, safekeeping, and future reference.
 - All other emails (e.g. arranging discipleship meetings, follow-up, etc.) should be sent to the young person with a BCC/CC to their respective parent/s for accountability, safekeeping, and future reference.
- Online / Social Media
 - Ministry participants, their friends, and parents should be directed to the Church or ministry group’s official social media account (e.g. Facebook, Instagram).
 - The information posted online should be limited to logistical purposes and basic encouragement.
 - Caution should be observed with the use of any sites that delete posts, images, and comments.
 - As such, there should be at least 2 designated leaders whose role it is to moderate each account for accountability.
- Discipleship Groups (Yrs 9-12)
 - A leader can meet with two or more youth for discipleship in a public place where other people are present (e.g. Church, McDonalds, café, etc.).
 - Written or verbal permission from the parent/s is required to ensure they are aware of the meeting and its purpose.
 - Leaders can communicate with their discipleship group using an agreed social media platform (e.g. Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp), providing it includes a second leader whose role it is to moderate the group for accountability.

- The information posted on these groups should be for logistics, encouragement, discipleship, and prayer.
- The Youth & Young Adults Pastor should be informed of all discipleship social media groups and ensure all groups have a designated second leader.
- Meeting with Youth
If in exceptional circumstances you are meeting a youth privately, you should:
 - have parental or guardian consent;
 - ensure where appropriate that a parent, guardian, or suitable adult is present;
 - inform another member of the clergy, an adult church worker or another adult of the time, location, and duration of the meeting;
 - not invite to or have youth in your home or visit youth in their home when no other adult is present; and
 - make a record of the time, location, duration, and circumstances of any meeting where it is impracticable to follow these guidelines.

(iii) Social Media

- It is inappropriate to contact or talk with a child (primary age and below) on any social networking site
- When communicating with young people (High school age) online, caution must be used. Leaders must maintain transparency and be accountable for what they say. Leaders must also take care with the message they intend to communicate through both the words and images used as it may be perceived differently by those who view it.
 - Where possible, young people should be directed to the official church social media group/accounts (e.g. Facebook and Instagram).
 - Leaders are not to initiate friend requests with young people, including asking young people to initiate friend requests with them nor accept a friend request from a young person.
 - Under NO circumstances is a leader to communicate directly with a young person using their private social media account. ALL forms of direct communication with young people must be via the designated channels outlined above.
- In the event a child/young person initiates or sends a private/direct message to a leader in any ministry, the leader is to
 - inform the child/young person that they cannot communicate with them in that way and direct them to the official church social media group/accounts (e.g. Facebook and Instagram).
 - The leader is then to inform/communicate with the leader they report to or the Senior Minister of the communication. If the communication is sensitive in nature,

the leader is to inform the child/young person that they will also be informing their ministry leader or Senior Minister of the communication.

- A senior leader (e.g. Youth Minister/Senior Minister) should be informed of all social media platforms, accounts, and groups used by the children's and youth ministry teams.

(iv) Video calling (mobile phone/online)

Ministry leaders should not use video calling to communicate with children or young people other than as provided in Annexure 1.

(v) Photographs and Videos

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

- **An appointed leader** should take photos or videos of children's / youth ministry activities.
- If photos and videos are to be retained, they should be **saved to a secure location as soon as practical and kept secure** (e.g. a ministry-specific Dropbox or Google Drive folder that is accessed only by the senior leader/s). The photos should then be deleted from the respective leader's camera or phone.
- Leaders should not be taking photos or videos of children or youth during ministry activities for any reason other than official ministry purposes which have been clearly discussed with the ministry leader.
- When taking photos or videos:
 - Do not photograph any child/young people without parental consent.
 - Do not photograph any child/young people who have asked not to be photographed.
 - Focus on small groups rather than individuals.
 - All children/young people must be appropriately dressed when photographed.
 - Embarrassing or possibly degrading photos must be deleted immediately.
 - Children/young people should only take photos of ministry leaders as part of a group.

Kids Church, Kids Club and Mainly Music

- Photographs or videos taken as a part of these ministry activities may not be posted on any public social media platform and may only be posted on the church ministry group's private Facebook page (or other social media platform)
- Exceptions may be made with the approval of the senior minister or his delegate and subject to also having parent/guardian approval via the activity registration form.

Printing or Posting Online

- When using photos or videos of children or young people in print or online:
 - Ensure that written permission to display photos or videos of the children/youth publicly has been obtained via the activity registration form.
 - Avoid identifying the person/s in the photograph in physical publications.
 - Do not tag children/youth in pictures online.
- The Senior Ministry leader or delegate/s should monitor the Church's social media sites to ensure photos, videos and comments are appropriate.

4. POLICY REVIEW

The Social Contact Policy will be reviewed and revised by the Parish Council as often as needed, with a comprehensive review every three years.

Parish Council must approve all reviews, amendments and changes to this policy.

Approved – 25 March 2025.

Annexure 1

Guidelines For Ministry Via Online Video Communication

1. APPLICATION

Ordinarily, ministry leaders and children/youth ministry participants are not permitted to use video calling to communicate with each other.

However in the event that a situation arises where social contact restrictions are mandated by a Federal, State or Local Government body such that the ministry group is unable to meet face to face and it is deemed wise to do so using Video Calling, then communication by Ministry leaders with Youth Group and Youth Discipleship Group participants is permitted subject to compliance with following guidelines.

For the safety of both our youth and the leaders, we are encouraging everyone to follow the guidelines outlined below.

2. GUIDELINES

(i) Participants must use their full name when joining Zoom meetings.

Participants' Zoom username must be their first and last name. This allows us to know who we are allowing to enter our Zoom meeting. If they are not using their full name on their Zoom account name (i.e., John Smith) then we will not be allowing them to enter for the safety of others because we are unsure of who they are.

(ii) Where possible, participants should join Zoom from an appropriate location.

Appropriate locations are shared spaces like living rooms or kitchens, which are easily accessible to parents and caregivers. Less than ideal locations are private places like bedrooms and bathrooms. Please also consider what is in the background of your chosen meeting space.

(iii) Participants are not to record or share links for Youth meetings.

Where possible, leaders will turn this function off. There are legal ramifications for recording people without consent. In the case of breakout rooms, and where there is only one leader present, we are required to record the meeting and store the recording. Participants do not have permission to show others the content of the meeting by sharing the screen or audio with others including as it happens. We do recognise that parents and caregivers are an exception and ask that they respect the privacy and confidentiality of other participants, treating any personal information that is overheard with discretion.

CROSSLIGHT ANGLICAN CHURCH: LIVE FOR MORE. LIVE FOR JESUS

www.crosslightanglican.org.au

office@crosslightanglican.org.au

- (iv) All Youth meetings will use the official church account, be scheduled, and have trained adult leaders present at all times.**

Each meeting will operate on an official account and invitations to the scheduled meetings will be sent out. We will have trained adult leaders with a current Working with Children Check and current Safe Ministry qualifications present in each Zoom meeting and breakout session.

- (v) Participants must wear appropriate attire while on Zoom.**

We ask that participants wear appropriate attire. This means no pyjamas, revealing or inappropriate clothing.

- (vi) Participants must not share any inappropriate text, images, videos, backgrounds, or any other content in the live feed, chat function, or by any other means. Participants must not engage in any inappropriate conversations.**

Any content considered by the leaders to be inappropriate (obscene, abusive, derogatory, etc.) will not be tolerated. This includes what participants say both verbally and using the private chat function. Leaders reserve the right to delete any inappropriate content.

- (vii) All regular Safe Ministry and Faithfulness in Service guidelines will be followed by all leaders.**

For more information on these guidelines please see:

- Safe Ministry:
www.safeministry.org.au
- Faithfulness in Service:
www.safeministry.org.au/faithfulness-in-service-code-of-conduct