

Diocese of Orange



Pastoral Guidelines for the use of Technology

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(Adapted from *Technology Procedural Recommendations* written by D. Scott Miller and Kristin Witte, Division of Youth and Young Adult Ministry, Archdiocese of Baltimore)

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About this Document

This document was created and is intended to provide guidance and best practice recommendations to pastoral ministers on the use of technology. These “guidelines” are not meant to be policy and can be used as boundaries for the use of technology in ministry. These guidelines can be used as recommendations in order to facilitate proper use of technology in pastoral settings. The creation of a faith formation handbook is in process. This document will be included in that handbook.

While this document speaks of most technology forms that exist today, there is an awareness of the ever changing world of technology. Therefore, we encourage you to refer to this document for some guidance and recommendations and realize there will be a need for continual dialogue in this matter.

Finally, it is important to note the expectation of the use of the “prudent principle,” a principle which should always guide a pastoral minister. A pastoral minister should be aware of doing everything that is “prudently” possible to avoid problems, miscommunication and misunderstandings. Common sense should be the guide in all circumstances and is expected to be used by any and all adults serving our communities and parishes in the Diocese of Orange.

SECTION ONE – INTRODUCTION

The enclosed guidelines and recommendations are designed to aid pastoral ministers and parish personnel in determining appropriate boundaries in their use of technology within their professional relationships with others.

Jesus walked among us. He listened. He spoke. He told stories and spoke in parables. He shared meals. He touched and was touched. He healed others with forgiveness, a touch, and/or a vocal command.

Jesus is the fullest experience of God being in relationship with us. We who desire to communicate God's love for others and the invitation to be disciples of Jesus must recognize the value of real relationships.

“The bond between the Church’s ministers and the people they serve is inviolable. It is a relationship that is rooted in trust...”

–Bishop Patrick J. McGrath, Bishop of San Jose

Those who minister and work in pastoral settings have long understood that our efforts are to be relational.

“Effective ministry with adolescents (has always been) built on relationships. The central place of the Emmaus story in A Vision of Youth Ministry demonstrated the primacy of relationships and of discovering God within those relationships”
(Renewing the Vision: A Framework for Catholic Youth Ministry)

Yet, as we fully enter into this new millennium, ministry and relationships are changing. Technological tools are already used in positive and dynamic ways in many pastoral settings.

“Using the media correctly and competently can lead to a genuine inculturation of the Gospel.”

(The Church in America [Ecclesia in America], no. 72)

Our goal is to empower pastoral ministers in these changing times. This document provides clarity, guidance, and best practices in the use of technology.

SECTION TWO – BASIC TERMS

Since the ministry environment is ever changing, it is helpful to provide a definition of key terms.

- Pastoral Ministers: any person in ministry
- Young Adults: Any person between the age of 18-39
- Minors: Any person under the age of 18
- Vulnerable Adult: A dependant adult
- Mandated reporter: Anyone in the capacity of supervisory or disciplinary role over minors or vulnerable adults
- Ethical/Permissive Reporter: Anyone who works in a pastoral setting with minors and/or vulnerable adults
- Parent Permission Form: parent/guardian authorization (needed for every minor in pastoral settings)
- Participant Release Form: participant authorization (needed for every adult working in a pastoral setting with minors and/or vulnerable adults.)
- Code of Conduct Form for Teens: a “recommended form” which can be used along with the Parent Permission Form; allowing minors to also be cognizant of what is expected of their participation.
- Code of Conduct Form for Participants: a “recommended form” which can be used along with the Participant Form allows for participants to understand basic expectations.

SECTION THREE – BASIC PRINCIPLES

Advances in technology have increased the opportunities for the church to communicate her message. For those who work with minors and vulnerable adults, the Internet and other forms of technology should be considered tools for communication, collaboration and information. Technology, however, should not become an expedient and convenient means to evade the complicated and delicate work of building human relationships. It by no means should replace the tried and true opportunity to connect with individuals. Technology at times falls short in truly enhancing the connectedness of human-to-human, face-to-face social interaction.

True community and relationship building within faith-based relationships follow the example of Jesus Christ - walking, talking, sharing meals, and praying face-to-face with others. Those who work on behalf of the Church should demand a more authentic relationship with those whom they serve. While technology might provide an open door to connect with individuals, deeper connection will best occur face-to-face, building relationships one person at a time.

People may initiate online discussions that they are too embarrassed or timid to initiate in person. They may bare their souls on the Internet because there's no perceived consequence to what they say—there is assumed anonymity.

- It is entirely possible to form inauthentic relationships on-line—almost like acting, taking on a persona, or playing a role.
- It is difficult to judge peoples' emotional or spiritual states only on the basis of what they say online. The emotive blog entry, or the depressed You-Tube video may or may not accurately reflect what a person is going through.

Boundaries

Those who minister and work in pastoral settings should be ever vigilant regarding healthy boundaries with anyone, but especially minors and vulnerable adults. Minors and vulnerable adults are not the peers of an adult serving within a ministry capacity. It is inappropriate for pastoral ministers to include them within their own social circle, on-line or otherwise. Ministers should not be accessible to

the minors and vulnerable adults they serve on a constant on-call or regular social basis.

Primacy of Parents/Guardians

Parents/Guardians are the primary educators in faith and the first heralds of the faith with regard to their children. Those who minister in pastoral settings must recognize the importance of the role of parents and guardians when dealing with all technological forms of communication with minors and vulnerable adults. As always, we seek a partnership with parents/guardians in the faith formation of their children.

We should be aware that many young people utilize technology, socially or otherwise, with the permission of their parents/guardian. Yet, parents/guardians remain wary regarding the safety of their children, particularly when using technology. It is essential that we work in partnership with parents/guardians to respect their authority while providing them with information regarding safe use of technology for their children.

Discretion

Those who minister and work in pastoral settings must take great care to be consistent in representing the worth of their character on-line. Clear communication and respect for boundaries is needed at any level of contact with minors and vulnerable adults.

E-mails, text messages, blog postings or comments, YouTube videos are all public forums from which a permanent record can be obtained. As a representative of the Church, those who minister to minors and vulnerable adults should be diligent in avoiding situations, which might be the source of scandal for themselves or others. Furthermore, those to whom we minister must be educated on the public nature of such communication.

Ownership

Any technological tools that we use as part of our ministry in the Diocese of Orange (such as, but not limited to websites, blogs, social network sites) are the property of the Diocese of Orange.

SECTION 4 MINISTRY WEB PAGES

Anyone who establishes a ministry web presence should make a commitment to this vehicle of communication. Web pages, especially the index or main page(s), should be regularly updated.

As with any ministry effort, there should be an intentional plan and set of goals regarding establishing and maintaining a web presence. This should be clearly communicated to the pastoral staff, volunteers, and those we minister including but not limited to their parents and/or guardians.

Great care should be used to protect people on a web page that is publicly accessible:

- Peoples' personal phone numbers or e-mail addresses should not be available.
- Written permission is required from parents/guardian before posting photos or videos of minors or vulnerable adults.
- When posting pictures or videos, use only the minor or vulnerable adults' first name and only with parent/guardian prior written authorization.
- At no point should a picture or video be used that might be considered embarrassing or unflattering.
- We should always be mindful to protect the reputations of our church membership. If individuals are uncomfortable with a particular photo or video, it should be immediately removed from the website.
- Regarding appropriate boundaries for the minister, great care should also be taken to protect contact information (home address or phone, cell number, home e-mail address, etc.) of adults and youth.

Best Practices

- Required text for global permission:

Photograph and Video Consent

From time to time, we take pictures and video of youth ministry events and gatherings. We would like to be able to use these photographs and videos for flyers, parish and diocesan publications, and the ministry website. To do this, we need both the students' and the parents' consent. We will not use the last names of any individual whose photos or videos are posted. If there are concerns about pictures or videos posted on the website, please contact the youth ministry coordinator or webmaster, and they will promptly be removed.

I/We, that parent(s) of this youth (name) _____, authorize and give full consent, without limitation or reservation, to (parish name) _____, to

publish any photographs or videos in which the above named student and/or pictures or videos of his/her parents or grandparent(s) appears while participating in any program with (parish name) _____ ministry. There will be no compensation for use of any photographs at the time of publication or in the future.

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SECTION 5 EMAIL, INSTANT MESSAGING, AND VIDEO CHATTING

Email and instant messaging allow for increased flexibility and immediacy in ministry communication. When appropriately combined with face-to-face communication, email and instant messaging can significantly enhance how we minister to others. The same boundary issues that must be respected in oral communication must be respected in written ones.

Good judgment should always be used with text based communication tools. Parental consent needs to be obtained when communicating by email or instant messaging with minors and vulnerable adults.

- Maintain a separate e-mail account for your professional communication and only use this account when communicating with youth or vulnerable adults.
- Email, Instant Messaging, and Video Chatting communication should only be used with the matters that deal with one's professional relationship. Communicate only about matters that address the business at hand of your ministry.
- Care should be taken to maintain professionalism and appropriate boundaries in all communication.
- There should be absolutely no personal exchanges. Parents should be included in the communication.

Written communication can be misinterpreted.

- Before sending an e-mail, ask yourself if someone reading it might "read something into it" that you didn't intend.
- Communicate in person whenever possible. If you think your e-mail might somehow be misunderstood, don't send it.
- If there is any potential for embarrassment or harm, reconsider sending the email or IM.
- Be cautious when sending an e-mail, especially either in haste and/or when emotions are involved.
- Before sending and/or responding to a video message be cautious of time of day, who you are responding to and/or reason for the video chat/post in the first place. (SEE NOTE AT END OF THIS SECTION)

Always avoid any communication that might be construed as having inappropriate sexual or romantic overtones. Do not reply to any such e-mail from a minor or vulnerable adult; make a copy of such inappropriate communication and notify your supervisor.

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Remember that there is no such thing as a private e-mail. All e-mails and IM's can be logged, archived, and forwarded to other parties. Your communication can quickly become a public matter.

- Unlike verbal communication, any form of written communication has a form of permanence. (Especially on the internet)
- There should be no expectation of privacy.

IMPORTANT NOTES:

- At no time is one-on-one video chatting appropriate with minors or vulnerable adults.
- Video chatting with a class and/or a group of people can be okay as soon as it is done and approved with Pastors consent and in the parish property.
- At no time should you engage a personal conversation with a minor through email, Facebook,IM, texting, Twitter or video chatting.

SECTION 6 PHONE CALLS AND TEXT MESSAGING

The same standards that apply to email and instant messaging must be maintained when communication occurs in phone calls or via text messages. Phone calls and texting with minors is strongly discouraged. Appropriate and healthy boundaries when using texting or speaking with a youth or vulnerable adult is always required of pastoral ministers in the church. Frequent and ongoing communication with a selected individual suggests an inappropriate relationship.

- A minister should exercise good judgment at all times when communicating with people.
 - o Dinner time, even if families don't often respect dinner time as family time, should be respected.
 - o While anyone to whom we minister might be on the phone or texting late into evening hours, ministers should set and communicate the timeframe when it is acceptable to make or receive non-emergency professional calls.
- Phone calls and text messages are for ministry purposes ONLY. Do not give out personal numbers.

Personal phone calls and texting, while intended to give the sense of pastoral availability, are not best for maintaining the professional boundaries of the minister or the ministry.

Finally the use of cell phones and picture and music capabilities is becoming increasingly popular. It is imperative that as a leader you protect the identity of those being photographed and/or video recorded in your care.

Best Practices

- Set up a text message tree that is initiated by youth leaders so that your cell phone number remains unknown (see Twitter in section 7, or www.callingpost.com)

- Set up a phone tree system that can send out blanket messages to cell phones and family phone numbers in order to inform parents/guardians about events and/or services.

Help Note: Set up a good registration form at the beginning of the year with questions regarding the use of cell phones numbers and texting capabilities with both minors and parents/guardians, this can facilitate the use of this technology throughout the year.

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SECTION 7 SOCIAL NETWORKING

A social network service utilizes software to build online social networks for communities of people who share interests and activities. Most services are primarily web based and provide various ways for users to interact, such as chat, messaging, email, video or voice chat, file sharing, blogging, discussion groups, and so on.

A variety of social networking tools are being used by millions of people on a regular basis, making it seem that social networking has become a part of everyday life. The most popular sites for this activity have been www.facebook.com, www.myspace.com, www.yahogroups.com and www.twitter.com.

Social networking has revolutionized the way we communicate and share information with one another. Therefore, it can also be a way to connect people with the church and the church's activities with people.

On any social network site, personal opinions and discussions are often conducted. It is essential for pastoral ministers to remember that even on the World Wide Web, others will recognize them as representing the values of the Catholic Church.

- If a professional staff minister wants to use social networking sites for ministry purposes, the Diocese of Orange requires that they create a professional social networking account that is separate from their personal account. This account should be seen as an official extension of the ministry organizations web presence and administrated by an adult and should be approved by the parish pastor or supervisor in which the social networking site will be used. Volunteers must not set up a special ministry account without the permission of the professional staff minister and/or the pastor.

- There is a difference between initiating a ‘friend request’ and accepting one. Pastoral Ministers must not initiate and ‘seek’ friends on the professional social networking account. **Those to whom we minister must request you as a friend first.**
- Pastoral Ministers **must never initiate and “seek” friends nor accept a friend request on their personal social networking site.**

For ministers, using the Internet for accessing information about the people you minister to is a violation of their privacy, even if that information is publicly accessible.

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Those working with minors under 18

- Please note the legal policies for Facebook, MySpace, and Twitter:
 - o “You may not use the Facebook Service if you are under 13. If you are between the ages of 13 and 17, we strongly suggest that you seek parental consent to use the Facebook Service.”
<http://www.facebook.com/terms.php>
 - o “By using the MySpace Services, you represent and warrant that (a) all registration information you submit is truthful and accurate; (b) you will maintain the accuracy of such information; (c) you are 13 years of age or older; and (d) your use of the MySpace Services does not violate any applicable law or regulation. Your profile may be deleted and your Membership may be terminated without warning, if we believe that you are under 13 years of age, if we believe that you are under 18 years of age and you represent yourself as 18 or older, or if we believe you are over 18 and represent yourself as under 18.”
<http://www.myspace.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=misc.terms>
 - o “You must be 13 years or older to use this site.”
<http://twitter.com/terms>
- One who ministers and works in pastoral settings with minors and vulnerable adults who has a “personal” social networking site, should neither advertise that site nor “friend” a minor or vulnerable adult to their personal site.

- If you become aware of information that is in the public domain of such a site, you are responsible for information that must be reported if a minor or vulnerable adult has been abused and/or harmed, is being abused and/or harmed or is under threat of harm.

On-line Gaming

Finally, those who minister and work in pastoral settings with minors and vulnerable adults should take care in their involvement with on-line gaming. While, for many, this is a recreational alternative, it is also an opportunity for social networking. Pastoral ministers should take care maintaining a healthy boundary between on line gaming with participants of their own age and on line gaming with minors. (Especially minors in the ministry programs they may be serving).

Best Practices

- The professional minister with permission from the pastor/supervisor should, if they choose to, create an online group on social networking sites that both young people and adult volunteers can join and interact without full access to one another's profile.
- It is important that adult volunteers while online and behind a "virtual identity" maintain a Christian attitude and action. They will be held to the same standards "on and off line"
- It is important that adult volunteers are engaged and made aware of the following recommendations and guidelines. They are to adhere to the same standard and no exceptions are to be made. This is done in order to protect the minors, the volunteers and the ministry.

SECTION 8 BLOGGING

The Web is no longer simply a repository of information—it has become a participatory platform for content creation and distribution. One method to develop and disseminate content is through a blog. The word “blog” is a shortening of the term Web log or Web-based log.

Those who minister and work in pastoral settings in the Diocese of Orange may establish and publish through blogs for ministry-related purposes with the prior approval of their pastor or supervisor. As a representative of the Church, blogging should be conducted in a professional manner for ministry purposes.

As with any professional communication, ministry blogs should **not** be used:

- For any personal communication or agenda.
- To conduct or promote outside business activities.
- To defame or cause defamation of the character of any individual, organization or institution.
- To divulge any personal information about those being ministered to, or jeopardize their safety in any other way.

Personal blogs should not be advertised to minors or vulnerable adults.

Best Practices

Those whose blogs support ministry are encouraged to publish information including, but not limited to:

- Fliers for upcoming activities, permission forms, calendar, and ministerial updates
- Additional links and references for faith formation
- Sacramental preparation information including: class times, checklists, sponsor resources, parent resources, etc.
- Descriptions of projects, including procedures, expectations, and suggested parent involvement
- Bible Studies and other spiritual links and prayer resources
- Achievements of parishioners

SECTION 9 APPENDIX

- Orange County Task Force:
- NETSMARTZ411:
Parents' and guardians' premier, online resource for answering questions about Internet Safety, computers, and the Web.
www.netsmartz411.org
- NCMEC: National Center for Missing and Exploited Children
Charles B. Wang International Children's Building
699 Prince Street
Alexandria VA 22314-3175
1-800-843-5678
www.missingkids.com
The Nation's Resource Center for Child Protection
The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children's® (NCMEC) mission is to help prevent child abduction and sexual exploitation; help find missing children; and assist victims of child abduction and sexual exploitation, their families, and the professionals who serve them.
- CyberTipline:
The Congressionally mandated CyberTipline is a reporting mechanism for cases of child sexual exploitation including child pornography, online enticement of children for sex acts, molestation of children outside the family, sex tourism of children, child victims of prostitution, and unsolicited obscene material sent to a child. Reports may be made 24-

hours per day, 7 days per week online at www.cybertipline.com or by calling 1-800-843-5678.

- Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC)

The ICAC Task Force Program was created to help State and local law enforcement agencies enhance their investigative response to offenders who use the Internet, online communication systems, or other computer technology to sexually exploit children. The program is currently composed of 59 regional Task Force agencies and is funded by the United States Office Of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. The Training & Technical Assistance Program was established to assist these agencies with training and technical assistance in support of their Internet Crimes Against Children initiatives.