

## 1.1 Purpose of Policy

This policy provides best practices in order to guide church staff, team members, and volunteers when various communication tools are used on behalf of Exeter United Church. This includes but is not limited to social media platforms, printed communications, e-mails, website, media and press, and other forms of public communication.

Exeter United Church (the 'Church'), as a community of faith, aims to improve the quality and consistency of our internal and external communications as well as minimizing the risk to individuals and the Church.

## 1.2 Definitions

- i) Church Mission: Exeter United Church's mission reflects our motivating vision of Open Arms, Open Hearts, Open Spirit.
- ii) Ministry Personnel: refers to paid ministry staff of the Church.
- iii) Office Administrator: refers to staff responsible for communications employed by the Church.
- iv) Leadership Team: refers to the elected Leadership Team ('Governing Body') that is responsible for the leadership in the care and oversight of the spiritual life and the interests of the Church.

## 1.3 Communications

- i) The purpose of church communications is to relay information about the Church to the church community and the broader community.
- ii) Ministry Personnel and Office Administrator have responsibility for editorial policies governing church communications, including ensuring that content supports our Church Mission; and protecting the privacy of individuals (see Privacy Policy).
- iii) Church communications may only be used to reflect events, activities and material which are relevant to our community of faith and aligns with our Church Mission and values. This excludes material that expresses editorial, personal or political messages as well as paid advertising.
- iv) All communications on behalf of the Church will be carried out by Ministry Personnel, Office Administrator, Leadership Team Chair or designate. Only authorized Church spokespersons such as Ministry Personnel, Office Administrator, and Leadership Team Chair or designate may coordinate communications with members of the media on behalf of the church.

- v) Any communications regarding unexpected events or serious incidents must be approved by the Leadership Team and Ministry Personnel, and follow Church Policies.
- vi) Church communications must not include any discriminatory language or statements including that which may be offensive or inflammatory due to the following: age, race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, gender identity, sexual identity and weight.
- vii) Upon request, accessible formats and communication supports shall be provided in a timely manner taking into account the person's accessibility needs, at a cost no more than what is regular, and in consultation with the person making the request to determine the suitability of what is provided. This extends to emergency procedures, educational and training resources, as well as the opportunity for an individual to provide feedback.

#### **1.4 Social Media and Web Content**

- i) The Office Administrator and Ministry Personnel are responsible for managing content and frequency of updates for web based communication, social media, and monitoring commentary on social media sites.
- ii) The purpose of web based and social media site content is to communicate current and upcoming events, news and commentary related to the activities of the Church and is reflective of our Church Mission and values.
- iii) Website and social media sites are to be open, transparent and safe for all users and as such postings must never be used to establish or disclose sensitive or confidential information, unless written consent to share said information is obtained from the individual it concerns. This includes, but is not limited to, personal and/or medical information.
- iv) Photos of individuals will be used on the Church's website and social media pages only with their written consent prior to posting. Written consent can be submitted via email or text.
- v) Copyright and Fair Use Laws must be respected at all times.
- vi) If any posted material concerning the Church seems to be illegal (e.g. child or elder abuse, etc.) members will contact the Office Administrator or Ministry Personnel who will in turn contact the appropriate authorities as required.
- vii) The Church discourages Staff, Ministry Personnel and volunteers from accepting invitations to "friend" youth members within personal networking sites.

- viii) Staff and Ministry Personnel of the Church are encouraged to remember that their online presence and posts can have the potential to affect the ministry of the Church. For this reason, it is imperative that online interactions are conducted responsibly. Questions of clarification can be directed to the Office Administrator.
- ix) In the event of a crisis affecting the Church, contact Ministry Personnel or the Office Administrator prior to responding to any posting or comments relating to the crisis.
- x) All of the Church's policies, including Harassment and Privacy, apply in the use of web based communication and social media.
- xi) The Church has one authorized website [www.exeterunitedchurch.com](http://www.exeterunitedchurch.com) to represent it's ministries, events, and activities.

### **1.5 E-mail Communication**

- i) E-mail communications are sent only to individuals who have requested e-mail communications and provided their e-mail address in compliance with the Church's Privacy Policy. There is an option for individuals to unsubscribe from group e-mails if they wish.
- ii) E-mail sent using the Church email address must include complete sender identification such as an identifying signature which includes name, title, phone, email address, church name, address and website.
- iii) Group emails must be sent using blind copy or distribution lists in order to protect unauthorized sharing of e-mail addresses.

### **1.6 Media Communication**

- i) Press releases will be written by or coordinated by the Office Administrator, in consultation with the Ministry Personnel or Leadership Team as required.
- ii) The Office Administrator will coordinate print advertising, radio or television advertising.
- iii) Volunteers or members who are approached by media will direct all media calls to the Leadership Team Chair or designate or the Office Administrator.
- iv) All media calls are to be reported to the Office Administrator for follow-up and archiving. The report is to include the reporter's name, media outlet and telephone number, the anticipated publication date, and the subject of the story.

*May 2019*