St Mary Bredin Church, Canterbury: E-Safety Guidelines

St Mary Bredin takes very seriously the role of safeguarding our children, young people, and adult church members. In light of the Diocese E-safety guidelines* issued in May 2012, SMB acknowledges the need to put guidelines in place to safeguard both our children and young people and volunteers specifically in relation to communicating and building relationships with them that involve technology/online interaction. In one way e-communication is safer than other forms as it is all tracked and recorded. As a church we want to embrace technology and understand that it is a normal part of a young person's world of communication. These guidelines are in place to try and enable us to be realistic and practical in needing to communicate, whilst ensuring safety on both sides. Below are our guidelines based on the Diocesan guidelines that are simplified, more explicit and specific to SMB.

Throughout this document when we refer to a 'leader', this is someone who is safely recruited (including references and DBS) and is a current member of a ministry team.

General points when communicating especially with a young person via technology:

- Do not delete anything that is sent – both from you, or to you
- It is advised that there is a curfew on communicating after 11pm
- To encourage accountability and reduce the potential for any concerns to be raised in respect to secretive activity, be aware that church leadership could ask to check messages at any time

Texting:
- Although texting is very useful for being able to contact someone urgently, texting is also much harder to trace and therefore should be avoided as a primary means of contact
- Any texts that are sent out should have another adult leader copied in to them, including in any subsequent replies in that conversation
- Texting should be used for the purpose of communicating about a specific activity, and not for general conversation which can be done by other means – however, when used, making a back-up copy for future reference is advised (eg. emailing a copy/screenshot of the text to yourself, setting up the phone to automatically back-up copies of texts on the computer)

Emails:

- Emails are easier to trace and therefore a useful way for us to communicate, particularly if contacting a whole group at a time
- Any emails that are sent out should have another adult leader copied in to them, including in any subsequent replies in that conversation

Social Media including Facebook:

- The rules of Facebook mean that organisations (e.g. SMB) should operate as a 'page' to communicate broadly with a large audience, whilst a common-interest group (eg Older Youth, Students) should operate as a 'group' to communicate in a space that doesn't have to be public (for anyone on Facebook to see)
- We must be aware that Facebook says that a person must be over 13 years old to have an account – we therefore cannot encourage any young people under 13 years old to have an account. This means we shall not operate a 'group' for Younger Youth so as not to isolate those too young to join in online. Older Youth has a 'group', and this works better as a place for interaction, discussion and comments than a public 'page'
- For young people to be in a group, they either have to be invited to join by an Admin of the group, or by someone else in the group– the Admin still needs to approve their membership status. A leader may accept a friend request from a young person on Facebook, but should set their personal privacy

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settings appropriately. There should be no private messages sent out to young people from both individual leaders they are 'friends' with, or a leader as a 'group' Admin representative – if a young person contacts a leader via a private message, the leader should tell Mim Taylor or Luke Bristowe. They should then reply explaining they need to invite another adult to the conversation/suggest to email and include another adult/suggest to talk on Sunday at church

- Please check with Mim Taylor or Luke Bristowe that any under 18's have consent from parents for any photos or videos to be posted online (both for the SMB website and social media pages)
- When a leader stops their involvement with their ministry they commit to a conversation with the Ministry Team Leader re friendship status with young people on Facebook. Please refer to the Volunteer Agreement signed in the safe recruitment process for further details.

Cyber bullying:

- Online bullying is becoming more common amongst young people, and can be very distressing as there is potential for it to be constant – with the advances in technology, bullying now goes beyond the school gates and can follow a young person home
- If there are any concerns of someone (both young person or adult) being bullied or bullying in this way, please speak to someone on the Safeguarding Group

Action we have in place:

- We recognise social networking and online communication is important for young people, and we welcome it as a form of communicating and engaging with them, so we have in place appropriate guidelines to help ensure the safety of both young people and adults
- From September 2013 parents of youth involved in regular and one off mid-week activities are asked for consent to allow their child to communicate with leaders via email and text (when necessary)
- From September 2013 all children and youth registration forms include asking consent from parents to allow their child's image to be posted on the SMB website and on any SMB affiliated social media accounts (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram)
- There is tighter monitoring of the Facebook groups - only leaders of groups will be 'Admins' (along with an appropriate church leader) in any SMB affiliated Facebook group, and they have responsibility for regulating what is posted in the group. Group security should be set appropriately and should be set so that an Admin must approve all group posts made by a group member before they are published. Any concerns should be raised with one of the Safeguarding Group
- We are happy to advertise under 18s events and activities through social media (all SMB related Facebook, Twitter and Instagram accounts) as long as there is no more information given than what is on the SMB website, and they are regulated by 'Admins' which includes an appropriate church leader (e.g. Vicar, Children's Worker, Ministry Support Worker)
- From September 2017 Younger Youth and Older Youth registration forms will include asking consent from parents to allow their child to communicate with leaders on Facebook (age appropriate), and via texting (when necessary) and emailing

These guidelines will be reviewed annually (next review July 2017)

Produced by the SMB Safeguarding Group (Barney de Berry, Craig Hunt, Lizzie Worthen, Sheila Rooke, Philip Lewis, Liz Lewis, Mim Taylor, Kelly Johnston and Luke Bristowe)

*for the full Diocese E-safety guidelines, please refer to https://www.canterburydiocese.org/media/forms/safeguarding/esafetyguidelines.pdf or speak to Mim Taylor for a copy

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