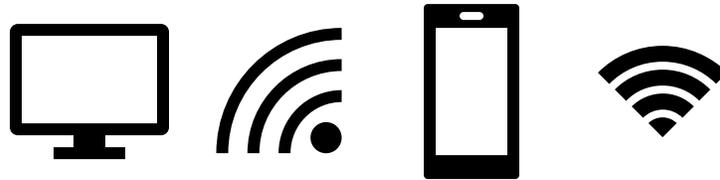


Being a Safe Church in Cyberspace



As we continue to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic we are increasingly using various online platforms to stay connected with our colleagues, congregations, students, clients, families and friends.

The ability to connect and stay in touch during these uncertain times is hugely beneficial and we must continue to take steps to ensure that our commitment to be a safe church for all people extends to increasingly busy cyberspaces.

The National Safe Church Unit is a church-wide resource, created to undertake the work required to deliver on the Church's commitment to be a safe place for all people, and we are asking everyone to ensure that safety is a key consideration when working and connecting online.

It is expected that all online communications are as respectful as in-person engagements would be. Please make sure that the information you provide online is accurate and, as always, do not share or publish any information that is misleading, offensive, bullying or unlawful. Be mindful of privacy rules and requirements; guidance is available [online](#) from the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner.

Adults are responsible for helping children safely explore the digital world and to help build their ability to make good decisions online. The Australia e-Safety Commissioner advises of three key strategies to help keep children safe online:

1. Be engaged, open and supportive – get involved with your children online as part of family life
2. Set some rules – agree age-appropriate rules for different devices and online access
3. Use the available technology – get to know the devices and online sites your child is using

Further information about supporting children to be safe online is available on the eSafety Commissioner's [website](#).

If your Church role or volunteering position requires you to communicate with children online, such as sharing information with a youth group, please remember that our commitment to being a safe church extends to the online world and make sure that you have taken steps to ensure your communications are safe. This may include:

- Obtaining appropriate permission from parents or carers to communicate online or to provide access to an online group space

- Setting boundaries and rules for your online engagement and sharing them with children and their parents or carers, for example agreeing specific times for contact and identifying if a parent will be present
- Putting measures in place to address any potential risks such as cyberbullying or inappropriate direct online contact
- Identifying how you will respond to any reports or experiences of inappropriate online conduct

Many entities across the Church have their own policies regarding online activities. Make sure you know what they are and how they apply to you. The Assembly has gathered a suite of resources for conducting ministry online, supporting people in their faith formation remotely and theological and prayerful reflections which are available [here](#).

While I encourage you to keep in touch with your networks by using the online technologies we have available to us I am also mindful that not every member of our Church can get online. I encourage you to continue to connect with those individuals and groups in ways that are safe and healthy.

The National Safe Church Unit is here to support you and can be contacted at safechurch@safechurch.uca.org.au

Rev John Cox

Director, National Safe Church Unit