**Purpose**

The purpose of this document is to describe the procedure/process for managing, maintaining and delegation of social media content associated with Erina Community Baptist Church. This includes the guidelines for authorizing and disseminating approved content across social media, sites and services mentioned below, and is also intended to cover any other social media services that are developed in the future:

1. social networking sites (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, Whats App);
2. professional networking services (e.g. LinkedIn)
3. video and photo sharing websites (e.g. YouTube)
4. micro-blogging (e.g. Twitter);
5. forums and discussion boards (e.g. Google Groups);
6. online collaborations (e.g. Wikipedia);
7. podcasting;
8. blogs including corporate blogs and personal blogs; and
9. blogs hosted by traditional media outlets.

This policy aims to ensure the effective management and responsible representation of ECBC’s online presence across the diverse landscape of social media platforms, sites and services.

**Christian Rationale**

In response to Christ’s call to ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength and love your neighbour as yourself’ (Mark 12:30-31), Erina Community Baptist Church is committed to the health, wellbeing and safety of every person connected to us, its activities, or who enter the land on which we are built.

It is our mission to be a loving church, knowing and sharing the life-changing message of Jesus, and one way we can fulfill this is through our policies and procedures, as we walk humbly in God’s grace to seek safety and justice in a world broken by sin.

We desire to be an authentic and healthy church that upholds government legislation (1 Peter 2:13) and the laws of the land (Genesis 2:15) since ‘through Him all things were made’ (John 1:3). Careful planning, implementing and reviewing of our social media policy enables us to guide people in maintaining a safe church environment, just as God keeps us safe (Psalm 46:1). This includes minimising risk and hazards, correctly reporting misconduct and nurturing leaders carrying out their duties and responsibilities.

Erina Community Baptist Church places a high priority on ensuring online social media safety, aligning with our Christian commitment to act as ‘faithful stewards’ and utilize our talents to ‘serve others’ as guided by 1 Peter 4:10.

**Scope & Applicability**

This policy applies to all staff, pastors, leaders, volunteers and church members and any other persons that may be identified a part of ECBC. This includes where your comments, postings or profile can identify you a staff member or other worker of ECBC irrespective of whether you are using ECBC or personal computers, devices or equipment.

Activities on social media should be considered public. Despite the availability of privacy functions on social media, it is possible for content to be shared beyond intended recipients. This policy is for the mutual protection of ECBC and its works and is not intended to prevent, discourage, or unduly limit expression of personal opinions or online activities.

**This policy encourages staff and volunteers to address the ongoing inherent online risks by:**

* Identifying the possible risks in ECBC’s current online presence on various social media platforms
* Considering the risks in terms of consequences and likelihood
* Ensuring staff & volunteer are inducted and understand the following:

- Safe Church Policy

- Code of Conduct

- Screening Questionnaire

* Continual monitoring and reviewing risks as they occur

**Guidelines for appropriate use of social media**

ECBC expects that all of its staff, volunteers, and any other persons that may be identified as a part of ECBC will uphold the expected level of professional conduct and ethical behaviour when using social media. It is critical that staff and volunteers of ECBC exhibit a high standard of professional conduct to maintain public confidence in ECBC’s operations and reinforce the corporate values of transparency, accountability, respect and responsibility.

It is essential to adhere to the following guidelines:

1. think before you post/publish or share information through such sites;
2. be thoughtful and show respect for people with whom you interact;
3. be respectful of the opinions, cultures and beliefs of others;
4. be mindful that what you post/publish will be public for a long time and may be available even after you believe you have deleted it. Take care to protect your personal brand and your privacy and understand a platform’s terms of service;
5. disclose any conflicts of interest that may arise from associations made through social media. This includes when a personal interest could be perceived as influencing the performance of your official duties and responsibilities;
6. if you post/publish material in your personal capacity where you could be identified as being associated with ECBC, you should include a disclaimer such as ‘The posts on this site are my own and do not represent the positions, plans or opinions of organisations I am affiliated with.’ Irrespective of any disclaimer, you are responsible for any contributions, comments or posts made to social media in a personal capacity.
7. You must not at any time:
8. publish or post material that may be reasonably considered to be offensive, obscene, defamatory, threatening, harassing, bullying, discriminatory, hateful, racist, sexist or homophobic;
9. publish or post material that infringes copyright, constitutes a contempt of court, breaches a court suppression order or is otherwise unlawful or in breach of your professional obligations; use or disclose proprietary, commercially sensitive or confidential information;
10. mention the names, employees, services provided by or work undertaken for any client, customer, or supplier associated with ECBC. Do not share any confidential or personal information obtained in your capacity as a church worker.
11. claim or imply that you are authorized to speak on behalf of ECBC or that any opinions you express represent the official views of the church, unless you have received explicit authorization to do so.
12. communicate information about ECBC, unless you are authorised to do so;
13. make negative comments about ECBC, including any aspect of your employment and/or work with the church.
14. Engage in or initiate negative or derogatory comments about ECBC, its leaders, pastors, staff, volunteers or its members.

**Recommendations for Pastors & Staff using Social Media to Communicate**

**Communication with Minors:**

Communication must be transparent and accountable. Where pastors and staff are required to communicate with minors (under 18) for the purpose of event information, ministry related communication and well being check ups, the below approaches to mitigate risk is recommended:

* Keep communication to public forums (i.e avoid use of private messaging where possible)
* Do not encourage volunteers to communicate with minors (as per Safe Church Policy)
* If required to communicate with a minor utilize one of the below risk strategies
* Include the parent into the communication
* Add a second staff member into the conversation
* Screen shot the conversation with the minor and send to an accountability partner

**Social Media Boundary Recommendations**

**Minors**

Pastors, staff and volunteers should not initiate connections (e.g. friendship request) with any persons under the age of 18. Any approach must come from them with the consent of their parent and connected only through ECBC Pages (i.e ECBC Youth, KidsZone etc).

Pastors, staff and volunteers should be respectful of the wishes of parents in regards to any online interaction and should be aware of any connections with persons under the age of 18 they have currently and put immediate appropriate restrictions/boundaries in place. Likewise, pastors, staff and volunteers should also ensure that others working with underage people in ECBC follow this rule.

**Power inequities**

Staff and volunteers should carefully consider accepting a connection request from a congregation member. It is recommended that the relationship is well established already (e.g. a family member, prior friendship).

**Privacy**

Privacy and confidentiality must be respected by all parties. Permission must be obtained before sharing anyone’s personal information online. Permission from either the person or their legal guardian before sharing photos/videos of anyone unless in an agreed upon restricted space. Particularly be careful not to identify people in photos/videos without permission. Be careful in disclosing personal details in public that could make yourself or others the targets of fraud, exploitation or abuse.

**Personal Boundaries**

Staff and volunteers should be free to accept or decline connection requests as they deem fit. It is recommended however, that in each case the connection request should examine the impact of feelings of favouritism or rejection that may result.

Staff and volunteers should also take care to use social media in ways which preserve life balance. Therefore, staff and volunteers should not be expected to be constantly available and should also guard against the excessive intrusion of social media into time set apart for other purposes.

**Negative communication**

This type of communication is best carried out face to face. Social media is not to be used for negative or critical evaluations or resolving conflict. Conflict that arises on social media is to be dealt quickly with, whether publicly or privately, as warranted by the nature of the conflict.

**Accountability and transparency**

As is in line with the Safe Church Policycopies of electronic communication and interaction from staff and volunteers are to be kept where possible, especially with persons under the age of 18 or vulnerable people. Your own name must be used in interactions, so as to not misrepresent yourself or hide your identity.

**Decisions**

Decision making process of ECBC must not be pre-emptedby communicating decisions as confirmed or made which still require input from other parties.

**Policy Violations**

In the event of a breach of this policy, which includes any improper use of personal, church-related, or other social media platforms outside of church-related activities, you may be subject to disciplinary measures, up to and including termination of your association with ECBC. Additionally, we may request the removal of any content deemed inappropriate.

**Version Control**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Version** | **Changes from previous** | **Date** | **Comment** |
| 1.0 | First Draft | 4/9/23 | For CLT Approval |
|  | Approval | 19/10/23 | CLT Approved |