

## Electronic Communication and Social Media Policy

<b>Document Number</b>	GCCP004
<b>Commencement date</b>	16 March 2017
<b>Summary</b>	This Policy details the expectations, acceptable and unacceptable use of all electronic communication and social media platforms for Church employees
<b>Replaces document</b>	This policy replaces all other policies, guidelines and documents relating to Electronic Communication and Social Media (formal and informal)
<b>Contact</b>	Ps Jonathan Nicholson E: <a href="mailto:jonathan@gencitychurch.com.au">jonathan@gencitychurch.com.au</a>
<b>Applies to</b>	All Generation City Church and Newcastle Care employees, staff, volunteers, Board Members and contractors and includes all associated ministries, initiatives and programs
<b>Audience</b>	All employees, staff, volunteers, Board Members and contractors
<b>Review date</b>	16 January 2022

Document No:	GCCP004	Version:	2
Author:	Jonathon Nicholson	Approved by Senior Pastor:	March 2017
Responsible person:	Jonathan Nicholson	Scheduled review date:	Jan 2028

## ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION AND SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

### PURPOSE

Generation City Church is embracing the use of and participation in electronic communication and social media. This Policy outlines the expectations, acceptable and unacceptable use of all electronic communication and social media platforms for all Church staff, including volunteers, to protect both you and the church.

### IMPLEMENTATION

The Senior Pastors are required to ensure that this Policy is communicated to, and implemented by all staff, volunteers, Management Board members, contractors and others involved in any Church ministry, including Newcastle Care.

### REVISION HISTORY

Version	Date approved	Approved by	Amendment notes	Next review due

*This Policy has been adapted from the ACC Local Churches Social Media Guidelines and may be varied, withdrawn or replaced at any time.*

### ATTACHMENTS

1. Electronic Communication and Social Media Policy

## Contents

1. BACKGROUND .....	4
1.1. About this document .....	4
1.2. Key definitions .....	4
2. GUIDELINES .....	5
2.1. What you say reflects who you represent .....	5
2.2. Expressing opinions.....	5
2.3. Updated and timely .....	5
2.4. Uphold Christian values .....	6
2.5. Protect confidential information and relationships .....	6

**MEDIA ENQUIRIES:** Your postings may generate media coverage. If a member of the media contacts you about a posting on your personal blog, social network, or on an official church blog, that relates to Generation City Church, please contact Ps Jonathan Nicholson.

# 1. BACKGROUND

## 1.1. About this document

Electronic communication and social media in its various forms is an incredible tool for communication. It also has the potential for inappropriate use and miscommunication that could result in offense and accusations of misconduct. The following guidelines aim to provide you with guidance and practical advice-and also to protect both you and the church, as Generation City Church embraces electronic communication and social media.

## 1.2. Key definitions

**Electronic communication** in this document refers to, but is not limited to; the transfer of writing, signals, data, images or sound sent via an electronic device. This includes, but is not limited to, email, sms or text messages, social media messaging and image sharing. These may or may not be related to Church activities.

**Generation City Church (GCC)** also includes Newcastle Care, all Management Boards and all other Ministries and programs that are operated by or associated with Generation City Church.

**Social media** in this document refers to, but is not limited to, sites including; Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, What's app, LinkedIn, Wikipedia and videos on YouTube and Vimeo. It also includes, but is not limited to, other sites where people interact with others and participate in including; blogs, comments, reviews and online polls. These may or may not be related to Church activities.

**Staff** in this document refers to all staff, employees, Board members and volunteers of Generation City Church and Newcastle Care whether paid or unpaid.

**Child or Young Person** in this document refers to an individual under the age of 18 years.

## 2. GUIDELINES

As a staff member or volunteer of Generation City Church, you are viewed by outside parties as a representative of the Church. Even in your personal electronic communication and use of social media, you should assume that you will be identified with Generation City Church. Therefore, as in all areas of daily life, a staff member's or volunteer's personal communications, website or blog is a reflection on the movement, whether or not Generation City Church is specifically discussed or referenced. If you choose to identify yourself as a member of Generation City Church or to discuss any related matters on any social media forum, please bear in mind that although you may view your interaction as a personal project, some readers may assume you are speaking on behalf of Generation City Church. We ask that you observe the follow guidelines to preserve the Christian witness and effectiveness of both yourself and the church.

### 2.1. What you say reflects who you represent

Make sure your communications are above reproach, in terms of content, language, images and opinions. Even when you are speaking or writing as an individual, people may perceive you to be speaking or writing on behalf of Generation City Church. If you blog or discuss topics or activities related to Generation City Church, be upfront and explain that you work there; however, include the following disclaimer on your blog or posts: *"The opinions and views expressed on this site are my own and do not necessarily represent those of my employer, Generation City Church"*.

### 2.2. Expressing opinions

One of the aims of social media is to create dialogue, and people won't always agree on an issue. When confronted with a difference of opinion, stay cool-headed and don't retaliate in the heat of the moment. Express your points in a clear, loving, and logical way. Don't pick fights and choose your battles wisely. Correct mistakes when needed and if you encounter disparaging remarks about the Church, please let our Leadership Team know ASAP. They will gladly review it and determine if an official response is needed. Consider everything you write as you would say to a journalist or people you don't know. If you wouldn't make your electronic communication or social media statements publicly to a wider audience, don't say it online.

### 2.3. Updated and timely

Part of the appeal of social media is that the conversation occurs almost in real time. So, if you are going to participate in an active way, make sure you are willing to take the time to refresh content, respond to questions and update information regularly and correct information when appropriate. As a reminder, any time and effort spent on your own

personal blog or other social media should be done on your personal time and should not interfere with your job duties or work commitments.

## **2.4. Uphold Christian values**

- Always demonstrate loyalty to the church and to each other.
- Be sensitive to linking to content. Redirecting to another site may imply an endorsement of its content.
- Avoid creating competing web properties with the Church's official web presence. For example, posting official Generation City Church media or communications on your site without it being published on Generation City Church's official web presence.
- Report any misuse of Generation City Church's trademark logo. Only those authorised by Generation City Church may use the logos, so be sure not to include them in your personal blogs or postings, even if it is used as a link to one of Generation City Church's official web properties.

## **2.5. Protect confidential information and relationships**

Online communication and postings are not private. Be aware that what you post online may be around for a long time and potentially shared with others.

- Avoid identifying and discussing others, including church members, visitors, or staff, especially any pastoral details such as hospitalisations, deaths, health concerns, or counselling engagements except with the express permission of the person. This exception may relate for example to prayer requests when the person has consented to the information being shared on a social media platform which may be publicly accessible.
- Obtain permission before; posting pictures of others, 'tagging' or including others in posts or discussions or before posting copyrighted material.
- You must take proper care not to purposefully or inadvertently disclose or distribute any information or intellectual property that is confidential or proprietary to Generation City Church. Be sure that what you are sharing has been published in some other official form of communication.
- You are personally responsible for the content of your social media activity and can be held liable for any content deemed to be defamatory, obscene or offensive. Exercise extreme caution regarding copyrighted material, derogatory remarks, exaggeration and guesswork.

## **2.6. Communicating with Children or Young People**

All GCC people, especially those interacting with GenCityKids and GenCityYouth must be mindful of the position of trust they hold and maintain strict boundaries when communicating electronically with Children and Young People. It is recommended that all electronic communication with Children or Young People is done with the full knowledge of the parents or carers of the Child or Young Person, e.g. a statement such as “GCY may communicate information about upcoming activities to your child or young person via our official social media accounts” on a registration/consent form.

Specifically, all use of electronic communication with Children or Young People should:

- be transparent and accountable as far as is practical, that is as a team, not as individuals, e.g. the use of group emails and conversations in public forums only when necessary from authorised GCC accounts;
- not transmit, download, repost or store any communication that is: discriminatory, harassing, derogatory, obscene, sexually explicit or pornographic, defamatory, threatening, or for any purpose that is illegal or contrary to the Code of Conduct relevant to their position. In the case where people receive or become aware of such communication, they will report this to their Local Church Safer Churches Person/Team;
- not send any electronic communication that attempts to hide their identity or represent the sender as someone else.

Any inappropriate or concerning content should be immediately referred to the Ministry Leader or Safer Churches Team.