



Our Lady of Lourdes
Catholic Church

Policy for Communication with Minors

Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church makes use of a wide variety of means to communicate with our parishioners – adults and young people. These may include email, text messaging, our parish website, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and other social media sites. These technologies are valuable tools for ministry, but they carry the potential for misuse or abuse if proper procedures are not followed. In an effort to keep young people safe and maintain appropriate transparency when it comes to interaction with minors, we have adopted the following policies:

- **Email:**
 - o Parish employees are issued a parish email account, which is to be used for all ministry-related email communication.
 - o Personal email accounts are not to be used by parish employees when interacting with minors.
- **Social Media:**
 - o Parish accounts are used for posting to and communicating via Social Media.
 - o Personal Social Media Accounts are not to be used by parish employees when interacting with minors.
 - o A listing of all Social Media accounts used in parish ministries will be included on the parish website, and anyone who wishes may view social media posts at any time.
 - o Direct or Individual messages from parish staff members to minors on social media are generally to be avoided in favor of using Flocknote or Google Voice. However, where necessary, or if contact is initiated by a minor and a pastoral response is appropriate, this communication is to be documented and never deleted.
- **Group Messaging**
 - o Flocknote is the ordinary method used for group text message communication with minors. Parents may ask to be added to any Flocknote distribution group.
 - o Flocknote includes message archival, multiple administrator accounts, and other safeguards aimed at ensuring transparency.
- **Google Voice**
 - o For situations in which using Flocknote is not practical (e.g. responding to message from an individual student, reaching out to an individual student on an off-campus event such as NCYC, etc...), parish employees are issued a Google Voice mobile number. Any mobile phone calls or individual text messages are to be sent via this number.
 - o Communication with minors via text message or mobile phone is to be related to ministry functions. Personal (non-ministry related) communication between parish employees and minors is prohibited.
 - o Messages sent and received via the Google Voice account are archived, but never deleted.
 - o Personal mobile accounts are not to be used when communicating with minors.
 - o Parents may receive copies of all messages sent to their child by contacting the parish office.

- **Parental Control**
 - o Any parent who does not wish Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church staff to interact with their child via email, text message, or social media, should contact the pastor or parochial vicar. Every effort will be made to abide by the parents' wishes.
 - o While parish staff will take reasonable measures to abide wishes expressed by parents, they cannot be held responsible for messages initiated by students.
- **Internal Controls**
 - o Parish staff will archive but never delete messages sent to or received from minors.
 - o At least three parish employees, including the pastor or parochial vicar, will have access to account passwords for all Social Media Accounts, Flocknote Accounts, and Google Voice Accounts. This is to ensure transparency and accountability in their use.
- **Policy Distribution**
 - o This policy will be posted on the parish website and sent to parents annually.

Approved by  Date 4-17-2019