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POLICY ON COMMUNICATIONS AND MEDIA IN MINISTRY: A GUIDE FOR PASTORS, STAFF, VOLUNTEERS, YOUTH AND FAMILIES

DATE: Adopted by the Council of Hope Lutheran Church on March 9, 2010

PURPOSE: The following policy has been created by Hope Lutheran Church in an effort to establish, clarify and maintain appropriate boundaries and practices concerning contact and communications between youth, staff, pastors, members, and families of Hope Lutheran Church. The main purpose of this policy is to ensure the safety and well being of young people involved in Hope Lutheran Church programs and activities. It is intended to serve as a guide for the Pastor for Youth and Family Ministry (Youth Pastor) who directs and oversees Hope Lutheran Church's youth ministry program ("the Answer"), which is designed to facilitate and create relationships where youth connect with one another and with God.

POLICY STATEMENT: In order to protect youth, staff, volunteers, and Hope Lutheran Church, the Youth Pastor and/or designated leaders of "the Answer" will take the following steps to promote appropriate boundaries for ministry relationships while recognizing the inherently relational character of ministry as well as the potential benefits *and* risks of modern technology, which permits and encourages rapid interactive communications.

- A. It will be the Youth Pastor's responsibility to inform and educate youth, their parents (guardians), staff and volunteers of this policy.
- B. No staff or volunteer will participate in or initiate contact (outside of scheduled program meetings/events/services) with any participants of "the Answer" without the permission of the Youth Pastor.
- C. Annually, the Youth Pastor will organize a workshop on responsible use of interactive electronic communication devices such as cell phones, computers, PDAs, etc. Workshop topics will be designed to help parents, youth, and youth leaders better understand features and applications of communication tools currently in use. Topics will include methods for guiding young people and all users on how to apply Christian principles when using electronic devices with the goal of avoiding errors in judgment and abuse.

- D. Each month, the Youth Pastor or other designated leader of “the Answer” will take the following steps to monitor and avoid potential problems, which could arise as a result of abuses of electronic communications systems.
1. All youth workers (staff and volunteers) shall be required to keep a log of contacts and interactions with young people with whom they work. The worker’s log will track all contacts with youth including, but not be limited to, contact with youth that takes place outside of the regular weekly programs and special events of “the Answer.”
 - a. The log must contain such details as date, time, name and reason(s) for contact with youth outside of church. Contact is defined as meetings, phone conversations, e-mails, text messages, etc. The name of the youth may be entered in the log as initials or other means of identification.
 - b. If five or more text messages are sent to an individual by any staff or volunteer within one 24 hour period, a notation must be made in the worker’s log.
 - c. Instances where and when youth are transported by a youth worker to or from events other than those of the church shall be entered in the log.
 - d. A summary of any communication with youth or their family, outside of the regular weekly programs and special events (whether it is merely conversational or pertains to issues or concerns that may involve personal counseling) shall be entered in the log.
 - e. Any other interaction or correspondence that assists in full disclosure and transparency shall be entered in the log.
 2. Worker logs must be submitted to the Youth Pastor each week for review.
 3. Weekly meetings with the Youth Pastor will be considered the appropriate time for discussion of any concerns regarding these policies and matters of communication with youth and families of the church.
- E. Each month, the Youth Pastor or other designated leader of “the Answer” will report to the Lead Pastor and/or the Church Council any issues or concerns, which may arise out of the application of this policy.
- F. Parents of youth participating in “the Answer” will be encouraged to talk with the Youth Pastor about issues pertaining to this policy.
- G. The Youth Pastor will ensure all persons who work with youth are familiar with this policy prior to beginning their ministry assignment.
- H. The Youth Pastor or other designated leader of “the Answer” or the Hope Lutheran Church Council shall take steps to discontinue the involvement with “the Answer” of any person associated with “the Answer” who is unable or unwilling to abide by this policy.