



COLLIER STREET UNITED CHURCH COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

1. **PURPOSE**

Collier Street United Church is committed to provide a safe and sacred space for the varying needs of its members, adherents and the community. We strive to ensure that our interactions and communications represent our values and support healthy relationships, as we remain centred with God, in Barrie, on YOU!

This policy is to:

- Ensure consistent, high quality, and appropriate communications to and with all members of the church, prospective members, adherents and the neighboring community;
- Ensure all communications are accurate and appropriate within the context of a United Church faith community;
- Effectively utilize the limited budgeted resources for approved communications; and
- Protect the privacy of all church members and associates.

2. **POLICY STATEMENT**

The Communications Policy outlines the values we wish to reflect in our relationships within the Christian community of Collier Street United Church (the church). This includes relationships among and between congregants, adherents, leaders, staff, and others with whom we may be in conversation. Further, it is intended to present clear guidelines and expectations with respect to our communications with each other and the most effective use of communications tools on behalf of the church.

3. **SCOPE**

The Communications Policy applies to all types of communications within, related to and on behalf of Collier Street United Church. This includes communications between congregants, leaders, staff, volunteers and others. Communication may be conducted in a variety of ways including in person (i.e. face-to-face), verbally (i.e. by phone), in writing (i.e. hardcopy or electronic, printed materials, bulletin board posts, internal and external signs), via electronic means (i.e. email, social media comment, website post or comment), etc. Because technology and various platforms evolve over time, this policy is meant to apply to all communications channels and tools now and in the future, whether or not specified by name or in use at this time.

4. **PRINCIPLES**

The following states the values that we wish to reflect in all our relationships within the Christian community of Collier Street United Church (the church). This includes relationships among and between congregants, leaders, staff, and others with whom we may be in conversation.

4.1 **Caring for each other**

- We seek to develop ways of relating to each other that are consistent with the love and compassion lived and taught by Jesus.
- For us, this means going beyond ourselves to act for others in the community in supportive and caring ways.

- In keeping with our vision statement, we focus on creating a community of caring and unconditional acceptance among members of our church community, those who are new to our church community, and those in the broader community.
- We recognize that our congregation exists within a broader community: locally, nationally, and globally, and we seek to speak and act for the greater good of all.

4.2 Communication

- Living as Christians and community means treating one another with respect, honesty and openness, whether in agreement or disagreement.
- We strive to be as willing to listen as we are to speak.
- In our communication as we build relationships with one another, we speak from an “I” position without blaming others.
- We are respectful in our speech and our responses to one another.
- We do our best to refrain from gossip and offhand or intentional critical comments about a third party in the presence of others.
- We use email communication with care and refrain from using it in areas of sensitivity and criticism.

4.3 Meetings: Team, Board and Congregation

- In our Team, Board and Congregational meetings, we seek to be as concerned about how we conduct meetings, communicate with each other and make decisions, as we are about the issues.
- We expect our leaders to consider the opinions of the wider congregation in making decisions, but are also cognizant of the need for leadership in decision-making.
- We expect our leaders to keep the congregation informed through frequent and open communication, forums, and other ways of staying in touch.
- We expect the leaders to honour the confidentiality of their office. In all meetings we use due process when taking initiatives or making decisions.
- At the beginning of Team and Board meetings we commit together to honouring the Covenant, as follows:

Covenant (We say together):

*May we act with humility and respect;
 May the words we speak show truth and wisdom;
 May our thoughts be honest and courageous; and
 May everything, we think, say and do,
 show gratitude and be wrapped in love.*

- On a regular basis at the end of Team and Board meetings we review how well we have honoured the Covenant.

4.4 Disagreements

- We honour diversity and the uniqueness of each individual.
- When we encounter change with which we disagree, we will first address our concern with the appropriate person or group.
- Mistakes and inappropriate choices are understood as part of a process from which we learn.
- We recognize that conflict is natural and we view it as an opportunity for growth.
- When conflict arises, we acknowledge that it exists; we approach it fearlessly; we address it respectfully and in a timely matter; we seek resolution in positive, non-adversarial ways.

- When we feel we must speak “our truth” to another person, we endeavour, as the Scripture says, to “speak the truth in love.”
- When congregants do not agree with decisions made, dissenting opinions are expressed respectfully, and those who disagree seek to find ways to continue to support the community. Where that is not possible, we conduct ourselves in a manner that does not adversely affect the community or our own integrity.

4.5 Personal Responsibility and Power

- We realize that the life and mission of the congregation is the collective responsibility of all; therefore, we offer our share of support in presence, finances, and gifts of time and ability.
- We recognize that our strength as a church community is the active involvement of our people. As we encourage community members to be involved and to take on leadership roles in our various teams and initiatives, we acknowledge our joint responsibility to nurture and to provide support and appropriate opportunities for skill development and personal growth.
- We celebrate the use of personal power and influence for the empowerment of others and for the development and implementation of community goals. We strive to use our power in ways that respect individuals and the community, leaving room for the participation of others.
- We follow due process when taking initiatives or making decisions. We avoid conflict-of-interest in decision-making and dealings on behalf of the congregation.

4.6 General

- We govern and conduct ourselves in ways that are consistent with the ethos and the policy of the United Church of Canada.

5. TYPES OF COMMUNICATIONS

5.1 Congregational Communication

All communication will be handled in an appropriate way. When communication is sent to the Church Board by members/adherents and others, it will be addressed to the Secretary. Outside of a Board meeting, the Secretary and the Minister will ensure that appropriate steps are taken for the communication to be addressed, communicating to the Board when next it meets. During the Board meeting, a summary of information will be shared. Additional information may be requested from the correspondent as needed. Collier shares information relating to personnel, for information and decision **after** it has been appropriately or adequately addressed by the Ministry and Personnel (M&P) Team.

5.2 Mass Communication

The **purpose of mass communication** (i.e. e-newsletter) is to support and serve clergy, staff and leaders in furthering the ministries of Collier Street United Church and promoting the programs to the church members and community. Collier’s mass communication initiatives serve active members of all ages by keeping them informed of news, events and concerns of the church using both print and digital communication channels. In the interest of intentional management of the communications process, all official mass communications intended to represent, or be distributed on behalf of Collier Street United Church or its ministries must be sent to the church office for review and approval 7 (seven) days prior to publication. These communications need not be created by staff but they must be reviewed and approved before publication or release on behalf of the church. Unauthorized mass communication using the church name and targeting all or selected members

and/or external audiences is not permitted. Regular, programmatic emails to selected members/adherents may be approved for extended periods of time on a case-by-case basis.

5.3 Media Inquiries

The Minister and the Board Chair are the official representatives to speak on behalf of the congregation on media release or to give media update. All **media inquiries** should be directed to the Minister or Board Chair and appropriate follow up will be done in a timely manner. Event Coordinators may be the spokesperson for their event only, with advance coordination with the Minister or Board Chair.

5.4 Publications

Collier **publications** are for the purpose of communicating news and information for and about Collier. In the spirit of good stewardship of its limited resources of staff time, editorial space and audience attention, Collier limits its publications to promoting only ministries, programs and events sponsored or co-sponsored by Collier, Shining Waters Regional Council and/or the United Church of Canada. Exceptions may be made if there is a similar or complementary mission and an established connection or ongoing relationship between the sponsoring organization and Collier. The interest or involvement of Collier members *as individuals* does not establish sponsorship by the church itself. Using Collier facilities does not necessarily establish such a relationship.

5.5 Print, Electronic Newsletters and Announcements

The Minister or designate acts as editor of **print and electronic newsletters and announcements**. That is, determines scheduling and directs church office staff and/or the communications portfolio board member, regarding placement of articles and announcements in the various publications and website. Materials submitted by clergy, staff, members, and others for use in Collier publications may be edited for clarity, style, tone, spelling, grammar and length, or in order to comport with policies or the mission of Collier, Shining Waters Regional Council and/or the United Church of Canada. Space limitations and production schedules may preclude publication of submissions. Inappropriate or editorially unsuitable materials, as determined by the editor, will not be published. **Any changes deemed significant by the editor shall be reviewed** with the original author prior to publication. Every effort will be made to retain the original tone of the message.

Although there are often exceptions, announcements are usually started about four weeks in advance of the event being promoted or, if applicable, the registration deadline. Announcements are generally presented in chronological order and continue in the publications, as space permits, until the registration deadline has passed or the event has occurred. All **event announcements** should include a descriptive title, date, time, location, cost and registration deadline, if applicable, and a contact person's name, title, phone number and email address; and announcements should be written in third person, ideally with the major points included in the opening sentence. **Bulletin notices are due in or to the office on Mondays** to be included in the week's publications; submissions via email or website are preferred, however, a written form for announcements is also available in the church office. **At least one month's advance notice is appreciated for events requesting brochures, posters and/or social media campaigns.**

5.6 Commercial Messages and Advertisements

Collier does not publish **commercial messages** promoting for-profit businesses or professional practices, including offers of free products or services intended to promote a for-profit concern. Individuals' **advertisements** to buy or sell goods and services or concerning employment

opportunities are not appropriate for the church publications, including social media pages and bulletin boards. This does not apply to church fund raisers, raising funds for church programs, such as silent auction, holiday fairs, etc.

5.7 Collier Member/Adherent Directory

Printed copies of the **Collier member directory** are available at the front desk for use by congregants in contacting fellow members individually and in carrying out the ministries of the church. The directory is not to be used to create contact lists for solicitations on behalf of individuals or other organizations. Outdated copies should be shredded to protect identity and confidentiality. Electronic copies are available upon request from the church office.

All information maintained by Collier in its **member database** is kept private. In keeping with Privacy laws, Collier does not release members' names, contact information or other personally identifiable information, or provide information to third parties, about member's health status, living conditions or other private matters. Should a request for information about a member be received by the church, it will be referred to the member or his or her immediate family for response.

5.8 Copyright Laws

Collier obeys **copyright laws** and publishes only materials for which the proper licensing fees have been paid and/or permissions secured.

5.9 Collier Church Logo

The Collier logo should be used only in connection with official programs and ministries of the church, and only in materials and contexts that reflect favourably on Collier.

5.10 Photography and Videography

- Collier clergy, staff, A/V operators, congregation members and visitors sometimes record services, programs and Collier events as well as architectural features, gardens and other scenes around the church. Photography and videography are allowed so long as they do not disrupt or detract from the service or event.
- Photographers and videographers are encouraged to share their photographs and videos with the church, with files and copies to the church office for use in church publications.
- Photographers and videographers should ask clergy, musician's or speakers' permission before photographing or recording services, classes and other live presentations, especially small groups. Any instance when such technology would disturb the worship, prayer or small group dynamics should be considered before taking photographs or making video.
- Flash photography is not permitted during church services and should be used sparingly during classes and events, and only after gaining permission from the person leading the class or event, to minimize distraction.
- Minor children are not to be identified by name in photographs and videos published by the church.
- Individuals who do not want any likeness of themselves or their minor children to be used in church publications should notify the Minister or Office Administrator. Every effort will be made to exclude them when shooting photographs, although they may still appear in group shots.
- Wedding photographers should refer to the Wedding Guide for further details regarding wedding photographs.

5.11 Digital & Social Media Communications

- **The Principles outlined in Section 4.2 apply to all interpersonal, digital and social media communications by congregants, leaders, staff, volunteers and others.**
- All Collier clergy, staff and leaders should consider the content and nature of any post or re-post that will be read by or visible to members and friends of the church. **Your voice is often considered the voice of the church, even in cases of personal social media accounts.** Respectful, appropriate language that honours the dignity of all persons is encouraged. Common sense, discretion and decency should be employed. Special care should be taken to transcend differences and embrace similarities with love and inclusion, and to foster peace and respectful relationships with one another.
- With or without approval of the person(s) involved, Collier does not render pastoral care or publish private, confidential information about congregants, leaders, staff, and others through any web site, public social media channel, or other public forum.
- Digital communications received by clergy and staff will be treated with confidentiality and respect to the best of our abilities, and following these policies.
- Congregation members, leaders, staff and clergy should be **aware that all communication sent digitally (email, social networking sites, notes or posts, etc.) is NOT CONFIDENTIAL, and may be shared or reposted to others, regardless of the intent of the original author (member) or the clergy/staff.** All digital communications should be considered as potentially part of the permanent, public domain.
- In the virtual world healthy boundaries and safe church practices must be adhered to as they are in the physical world. Laws regarding mandated reporting of suspected abuse/neglect/exploitation of children, youth, elders and vulnerable adults apply in the virtual world as they do in the physical world.
- In the virtual world, “friend” can mean anyone with whom you are willing to communicate through that medium. In the physical world, friend can mean much more in terms of intimacy, self-disclosure, mutuality and expectations for relationship.
- Collier disclaims any association with or responsibility for uncontrollable content displayed on third-party web sites, such as Instagram, Facebook and YouTube, especially when content shared/posted is in violation of these communications policies. **Care should especially be taken when reposting a third party’s comments or posts, since reposting assumes agreement with and responsibility for its content.**
- Only permanent staff members may create new social media sites, pages or groups on behalf of Collier. Any existing site, page or group set up on behalf of the church, using the church name, must include the Minister, Office Administrator or current Board Member as an administrator and must be set to require administrator approval of posts.
- Staff members and congregants who set up accounts on behalf of the church for the purpose of using online tools (for example, Zoom Meetings, Google docs, etc.) are asked to provide a user name and password to the church office in case access to the account is needed.

6. ACCEPTABLE USE OF WIRELESS INFORMATION (WIFI) SYSTEM

Activities conducted online through the WIFI System shall be appropriate and shall not violate any law or regulation or the rights of Collier or any third party. Collier does not actively monitor the use of the WIFI System under normal circumstances. Access to the WIFI System may be denied, blocked, suspended, or terminated by Collier at any time for any reason including but not limited to, violation of this Agreement, actions that may lead to liability for Collier, and violation of applicable laws and

regulations. Collier will fully cooperate with law enforcement upon receipt of notice that use of the WIFI System is in violation of applicable law.

Examples of prohibited activities include, but are not limited to:

- Accessing, copying, storing, or transmitting offensive and/or otherwise inappropriate information including, but not limited to, information that can be considered defamatory, abusive, obscene, profane, sexually oriented, threatening, discriminatory, harassing, or that uses language or graphics which offends or tends to degrade others;
- Involvement in activity that is in violation of regulatory, federal, provincial or local law.
- Distribution of internet viruses or other destructive activities;
- Interfering with or disrupting the WIFI System or servers or networks connected to the WIFI System, or disobeying any requirements, procedures, policies or regulations of networks connected to the WIFI System;
- Any other actions that may otherwise violate policy, be unlawful or deemed inappropriate.

7. ROLES/RESPONSIBILITIES

The Communication policy is the responsibility of the Church Board. It is the role of every person involved in communication at Collier to keep faith to this policy. The Board will seek to review bi-annually during the month of March through the appropriate team. The Board will act on the recommendation and communicate to the congregation.

8. DEFINITIONS

adherent

A person who is attached to a congregation and contributes regularly to its life and work but is not formally a member of the United Church of Canada.

church board

The Church Board is the unified governing model of Collier Street United. It makes decisions on behalf of the congregation and recommends to the congregation matters of ministry and mission.

church board member

A Board member is an Elder who maintains oversight of all the affairs of the congregation. The work includes discussion and decision on mission priorities, projects, committees, building, finances, retreats, etc., with each decision seeking to fulfill the mission/core values of the Church. The main requirement would be “to participate intentionally” in the life of the governing body of our congregation. See, United Church of Canada Manual for more information.

communication

The imparting and exchanging of information or news.

congregant/congregation member

A person who is formally a member of the United Church of Canada.

elder/leader

A person elected by the pastoral charge who is entrusted with leadership among the whole congregation. Elders are full members of the United Church of Canada.

governance

The structure of authority and processes of decision-making used by a congregation.

staff/staff member

Clergy and lay staff who are employed by Collier Street United Church.

9. REFERENCES

Collier Street United Church “Workplace Violence and Harassment Policy”.

Collier Street United Church “Rental Policy – Acceptable Use of WIFI System”.

10. APPROVAL AUTHORITY

Church Board, Collier Street United Church

11. APPROVED (Church Board):

Board Chair (Name)

Board Chair (Signature)

DATE APPROVED:
