

WISCONSIN CONFERENCE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
Guidelines for Using Technology to Communicate

Facts:

1. Technology is here to stay, continuing to grow and expand.
2. Technology is an opportunity to reach and help young people connect with faith.
3. If we are unfamiliar with technology and how youth are using it, we may wonder about its safety.
4. Being an adult presence is not only part of our responsibility to young people but can serve as a protective filter for those who would do them harm.

There are numerous technologies that youth and adults are using to communicate. Facebook, Email, My Space, Twitter, Instant Messaging, Skype, YouTube, and Hulu, are just a few and more are being developed. By themselves, these are harmless, inventive ways to share information and stay in touch with friends and family. You can:

1. Be part of a group with similar interests, histories, and events.
2. Be in touch with people you don't see often, or at all.
3. Share notices, events, questions.
4. Have conversations, not meetings.

To safeguard against misuse, we suggest these guidelines for adults:

1. Learn how to use technology to be in contact with young people, especially in your role as a spiritual leader to youth and young adults.
2. This is a public forum; not a personal journal, therapy or a private conversation.
3. Know the people within your network.
4. Use group formats to send messages and notices. Make yourself and your messages transparent.
5. Be aware of pictures you post. You need permission to post youth pictures.
6. Model messaging as a responsible adult. Avoid innuendo and off color humor.
7. Check your security settings.
8. If you read something inappropriate or harmful to youth, follow up.
9. Your presence may help youth filter what they share.
10. Check in with your group often so they know you are part of the conversation.
11. If someone is in trouble, use public means to respond.
12. Don't delete messages, conversations, etc. They are your backup.

While most of us are used to using email on a regular basis, many of our youth have moved on to other means of communication. Just because it's new doesn't mean it's inherently evil. We won't give up cell phones because they might cause car accidents. With common sense and patience, we can use technology as an opportunity to be faithful adults for the next generation of God's children.

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