



# Electronic Media Safety Guidelines

Courtesy of UMC Discipleship Ministries

The internet and portable devices allow people to stay in contact with each other more easily than at any other time in the history of civilization. Some incredible ministry can take place using modern technology, but as with all forms of ministry there are some inherent risks involved with the use of electronic communications. However, following basic Safe Sanctuaries procedures can help to minimize those risks. There is no such thing as privacy on the Internet. Consider anything and everything on the internet as public information. Here are some recommendations:

## **Receive Parental/Guardian Permission**

1. In addition to general permission to participate in a FUMC ministry, it is advisable to receive advance parental permission for children and youth, and personal permission for vulnerable adults in writing for:
2. Posting photos of participants on any websites or sending them e-mail or cell phone messages or making videos for any use;
3. E-mailing, Instant Messaging, calling, texting, or sending data to a child, youth, or vulnerable adult by computer, cell phone; and
4. The sharing of any full name or contact information.

## **Never Post Easily Identifiable Information Online.**

1. If you communicate by email, do not use "broadcast" emails. Use the "BCC" (blind carbon copy) so that each recipient sees only his or her address when a message is received.
2. Be cautious when transmitting easily identifiable information like event dates, times, locations, or participants.
3. Limit what is communicated in electronic prayer requests. When placing anyone on an electronic prayer list, consider using only first names.

## **Limit individual communications with children, youth, and vulnerable adults.**

1. Conduct any communications in a professional manner. (Even though you may be a sounding board for a person having a bad day, the reverse is not true.)
2. Save all confidential cyber-communications you have with children, youth, and vulnerable adults (i.e., instant messages (IM's) chat room conversations, emails, etc.). An electronic paper trail can be important.