Web Savvy Ethics

BEING INTENTIONAL ABOUT DOING THINGS RIGHT.

Ethics

- Definition: A principle of right or good conduct or a body of such principles (The American Heritage Dictionary, third edition, 1994)

- For Christians, ethics cannot be separated from what we believe about God and our relationship to God. Faith and ethics are inextricably linked. (Robin W. Lovin, Christian Ethics: An Essential Guide. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2000.)

Things to Consider

- Church provided computers and internet access
- Policy statements
- Web Site Concerns
- Social Networking Sites Concerns
- Youth Ministry Concerns
- Forums and Blogging
- What to Post
- Texting and Email
- Process

Church provided computers and access

- Provided for business and ministry purposes

- This is true whether it is a desk top computer or a church issued laptop, notebook, smart phone, etc.

- Challenge: how do you institute a policy that is flexible, realistic and does not need "policing?"

Example: From the American Congregational Association

- "Internet and email access are provided to employees and volunteers of 🏫 for business and ministry purposes. While incidental use of these systems for personal communication is permissible, just like the incidental use of the telephone, it must never interfere with the employee's timely performance of all assigned duties and appropriate work place protocol."

Some Specifics

- Use of church computers or internet access for the purposes of a job search without permission is not allowed.

- Illegal activity, surfing of pornography is strictly prohibited and will result in immediate dismissal.

Websites: Issues to Consider

- Who will have administrative access to your website (ability to post, delete, alter content?)

- What types of things will you post there?

- How will you distinguish between public information, members only information and private information?

Social Networking Sites: Issues to Consider

- Personal Site vs. Church Site (personal page vs. fan page on Facebook)

- Who will be your administrators? (to add content, delete inappropriate content, scan for span, reply to comments)

Youth Ministry Issues

- Posting pictures and tagging youth (ask permission of parents? Don't ask permission? Get signed permission waivers?)

- Cyberbullying

- What constitutes excessive contact between pastor and youth (do you friend youth on your personal page?)

Forums and Blogging

- Monitoring is critical

- Remove posts that are rude or inappropriate

- Anonymity of posters is a potential problem

What to Post?

- Do you post prayer requests? If so, with what information?

- Under what circumstances, if any, do you post health or travel related information (mission trips?)

- Do you include "anonymous" meetings in your virtual calendar of events?

- Do you post birthdays and anniversaries?

General Considerations for Texting and Emailing

- Keep it short

- Use for good wishes, reminders, compliments

- Never use it for criticism

Email Considerations

- Keep it short

- Two paragraph rule: if your response to an email takes more than two paragraphs, pick up the phone instead (email for a time to call)

- Do not reply immediately to emails that provoke anger, anxiety or a strong emotional reaction

- Manage it! Turn off notifications and set aside specific times of the day to read and respond

Process Considerations

- Talk together about what is personal and private and what is ministry

- Be clear about guidelines for administrators

- Be transparent about who the administrators are.

- Remove access to sites when people leave

- **Always** use proper citations and credits (for text and pictures)

Remember

- What you post and where you surf may come back to haunt you!

- Always take the high road. Your cyber activity reflects on you and your ministry!

Discussion

- Thought?

- Ideas?

- Questions?