

Trinity Church Youth Safe Communication Policy

As of January 2021, Trinity is adopting the following policies as a supplement to the Diocese of California [Whole and Healthy Church](#) policy. These are intended to keep youth safe, and keep our community strong and connected. With parental permission, we hope to implement these amendments to the diocesan guidelines in order to be able to communicate with and support Trinity youth throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. In order to indicate their communication preferences, parents should be sure to fill out the [communication form linked here](#).

- **Texting:** Volunteers and staff *can communicate* via text with youth, unless parents specify otherwise. Volunteers/staff must keep settings on their devices to save all messages, and the youth minister and rector reserve the right to review all text conversations as needed.
- **Social Media:** Volunteers and staff *can communicate* via social media messengers with youth, with parental permission. Volunteers/staff must share their passwords to any relevant social media accounts, and the youth minister and rector reserve the right to review all conversations as needed.
- **Phone and video calls:** Volunteers and staff *can meet* via phone and video calls with youth, with parental permission. Youth should be within sight of a parent or other adult. Parents can use their discretion on what it means to be within sight so long as there is a chance of “reasonable discovery” to ensure private conversations remain appropriate. Volunteers and staff will also try to ensure another adult is within sight on their end of the conversation.
- **In-person meetings:** In-person one-on-one meetings have always been allowed by the diocese in public spaces. This remains true during COVID. Public spaces include outdoor coffee shops, parks, and other places that maintain the principle of “reasonable discovery” by another adult.
- **Confidential meetings:** If youth specifically request a confidential meeting (i.e. no adult present on their end) it must take place either in-person in a public space, or if it is a phone call the adult staff/volunteer must have a second adult present within sight on their end and take detailed notes.

Please note that volunteers and staff are required to keep a written record of all of their communications with youth via secure Google Doc, which they will update each week. The youth minister and clergy will review these secure documents as necessary

Small Groups

Small groups offer a way for youth to develop a closer relationship with one adult and a group of their peers. We recognize that since we are a generally small community, it is normal for youth to have relationships with adults outside of their small group leader. However, they are encouraged to use their leader as their primary “Trinity adult” to go to for support. Other staff and volunteers should keep small group leaders updated about pastoral concerns relating to members of their group. They should also point youth to their small group leaders when they are in need of support. In addition to the small group leader, the youth minister is also available to talk with any and all youth at any time.

Gifts and Care Packages

Gifts and care packages are sometimes distributed to the youth group or a small group by the youth minister or a small group leader. Individual gifts from staff/volunteers are acceptable when pastorally appropriate (such as for a graduation or the loss of a loved one) and should always be approved by the youth minister.

Physical touch (not applicable during COVID-19 pandemic):

Maintaining appropriate physical touch is essential to keeping our community safe and welcoming. Acceptable physical expressions of care include high fives, fist or elbow bumps, brief touching of shoulders, hands, or arms, laying on of hands with pastoral supervision and brief hugs and arms around shoulders. The most important thing in offering any physical expression of care is to ask for consent first! Youth and adults should always say, “Would you like a hug?” or “May I put my arm around you?” or something similar before touching someone else in the group.