# Digital Communication Policy Template

* This policy relates to online digital communication and ‘digital gatherings’, which include audio-only, text chat and video conferencing.
* ‘Digital gatherings’ refer to gatherings within approved [CHURCH] ministries, including gatherings with adults, children and youth.
* ‘Digital communication’ may be conducted via various platforms, however, digital gatherings are limited to platforms which provide password protection for all guests.
* The Digital Communication Policy sits in addition to [CHURCH] Safe Church and Communication policies.
* All leaders of group gatherings require Working with Children Checks and Police Checks where applicable and are trained and empowered by the relevant [CHURCH] ministry Pastor or supervisor.

## All leaders

 **Invitations:**

* All digital gatherings must use a meeting ID that is sent as a personal invitation only. No disclosure of the meeting link is to be published on a public platform.
* All digital gatherings require a password to protect against people hacking the meeting.
* All digital gatherings should have a predictable pattern or regularity. eg. the same day of the week at the same time of the day.
* The start and end time of the digital gathering should be included in the meeting invitation.
* A new person to the group (either a friend of a group member or someone responding to the website) must receive the digital gathering link from the group host/s.

**The content of the digital gathering:**

* The host/s of the digital gathering must be approved Ministry Leaders.
* The host/s ensure that they are the FIRST member/s of the gathering to join the conversation. For groups of adults, either two leaders should be present (preferred), or the meeting should be recorded prior to a second leader joining.
* Backgrounds for all leaders and members must be appropriate and considerate of the other members.
* Language and conversation topics must be appropriate and encouraging of those gathering.

**Ending the digital gathering:**

* The host/s of the digital gathering must ensure that they are the final member/s of the gathering to leave the conversation.

Additional requirements for leaders of youth and children

**Ratios:**

* Leader-to-child ratios, as for face-to-face gatherings, likewise apply to digital gatherings.
* There must be a minimum of two leaders present at all digital gatherings before children join.

**Invitations:**

* Leaders of children and youth must seek permission from parents before engaging people under the age of 18 in digital gatherings.
* All invitations to the digital gathering (including meeting IDs and passwords) must be made available to parents (or carers) and to the Pastor.
* ***Additional note for Primary aged children:*** *Parents or carers must be present at the start of the meeting. Parents or carers will be asked to be present with the child at the start of every digital gathering. After that, parents or carers are asked to remain close by their child/ren to supervise. If a parent is not present when a child logs into the digital gathering, the leader must ask the child to bring their parent or carer to the screen to receive permission for the child to continue in the digital gathering.*

**Physical Surroundings:**

* Hosts of digital gatherings of youth and children must choose a communal place within the home to ensure transparency.
* A youth or child must be in a communal place, or a space agreed by the parents or carers for digital gatherings. No closed doors are permitted.

**Photos and recordings of chats:**

* Permission should be given by all participants (including children, as well as their guardians) prior to taking photos and video recordings. If permission is given, the recording can only be shared on private platforms with the permission of the Pastor. The photo or video is not for public use or to be shared in any other way.

**Additional notes:**

* With the exception of approved digital gatherings within the youth and children’s ministry, leaders should not be communicating with the ministry’s youth or children through video chat.