

## **Electronic Communications Safe Church Policy Guidelines for Youth Advisors, Mentors, and Religious Education and Ministerial Staff.**

The purpose of these guidelines is to provide adults who are in mentoring and advisory roles with youth of First Unitarian Church of St. Louis with procedures for electronic communications. The vast numbers of communication possibilities and the quickness with which new applications and devices are created requires that adults working with youth be cognizant of the need to maintain appropriate relational boundaries no matter the means of communication. The spirit of this approach requires the adult to think of all communications as if they were happening in person (face to face) and apply the same standards for face to face meetings to exchanges through electronic media.

- Adult advisors and mentors will not have one-to-one discussions with youth through email, Facebook or any other electronic form of communication. When communicating through electronic media, the Religious Educator should be copied.
- Group communications through email, Facebook, etc. are appropriate. Another adult (parents, church staff, etc) will be copied on such communications.
- If a youth should contact a mentor, advisor or church staff privately through electronic communications, the recipient may send a reply with a cc either to the youth's parent or appropriate church staff personnel. If it is not possible to immediately cc an appropriate person, the conversation should be kept brief and the text of the "chat" should be copied and forwarded to the appropriate person.
- Adults working with youth will not accept invitations to be "friends" with youth and will not invite youth to be their "friends" on in social network sites. In addition, adults should recognize the public nature of social networking sites and as representatives of First Unitarian Church (volunteer and/or paid) and not post material that could be deemed inappropriately personal.
- If an adult is in doubt about the appropriateness of any ongoing or new forms for communication, they should consult with the appropriate staff and/or committees for guidance.