



Tips for the Effective Use of PHOTOGRAPHY

THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CANADA

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Images play an important part in telling a congregation's story. As the popular saying goes, "a picture is worth a thousand words." Photos and videos allow you to share what God is doing in your congregation with others through your website and social media presence. As more images are shared online, it is important that leaders know when, how and why permission is needed for photography and videography at congregational events. Here are some tips for ensuring you have the consent necessary to use and share images of congregational life at your church:

Reasonable Expectation of Privacy Whether or not you are legally allowed to photograph or take a video of someone without written consent depends on what is called "reasonable expectation of privacy." In general, it is ok to photograph people in public places, such as on the street or in a park, because there's no expectation of privacy. Churches are considered public spaces, but not all events held in church are public; some events, especially those involving children or vulnerable adults, require written permission from participants or their parents/guardians if a congregation would like to take and share photos/videos.

When is written consent required for photos/videos at a church event?

Photographs and video of *adults* participating in public events that take place in churches, such as worship and concerts, are ok to use without written permission *if the people photographed are not individually identified and they are aware that their photo may be taken*. It is best practice to notify those attending that they will be photographed by posting a sign at each entrance and making an announcement. Be sure the explanation on the sign is short and concise but very clear about the photographs/videos. If possible, it is also a good idea to have a section of the church designated as an area that will not be photographed.

If the people being photographed will be identified or there is a reasonable expectation of privacy, such as at a private church event or a church event held in someone's home, you must obtain written consent.

Sample Wording for Photography Notification

Photographs and/or videos may be taken in this worship service.

By entering and attending the service, you acknowledge and agree that your likeness may be included in photos and videos of the service and used by [insert name of church here] in online and print communications.

If you do not agree to this usage, please notify one of the usher/greeters or sit in the section marked as a non-photo zone.

This document gathers general best practices related to photo consent. As media related laws vary from province to province, the tips offered in this document do not constitute legal advice. If your ministry has specific concerns about photo consent, we encourage you to seek out an attorney with expertise in media law.

Photos/Videos with Children Always seek written permission from a parent or guardian before taking photographs or video of anyone under the age of majority (18 or 19, depending on your province). Permission can be incorporated into registration for church events (e.g. Sunday school, VBS, day camps, youth trips) by having parents/guardians sign a photo/video release form. No names or personal information should be shared alongside photographs of children. Be sure to check all photos and videos before sharing to ensure that you have consent forms from the parents/guardians of all minors who are included.

What type of photo release form do we need to use? Churches using photos of children, vulnerable adults, or anyone who will be individually identified must receive written permission from those in the photos or their parents/guardians. This is also the case with photos taken at events where there is a reasonable expectation of privacy, such as support group gatherings, prayer group meetings or programs with vulnerable populations. As well, church events that take place in someone's personal residence, such as a Bible Study, are considered private.

When creating a photo/video release form, it is best to ask for broad permission to publish and distribute images rather than asking to use the photos/videos in just one place. Even if you only want to post it on your church's website now, you may want to use it in the future as part a church newsletter or on social media. It is also important to receive broad permission because once an image is online you may not easily be able to control how it is used and shared.

Sample Photo/Video Release Form For a sample photo/video release form, please visit The Presbyterian Church in Canada website: presbyterian.ca/photos.

Request for Removal of Photo or Video If you receive a request to remove a photo or video from your website or social media pages by someone in the photograph or his/her parent or guardian, honour that request. It is unethical and, in many cases, illegal to use someone's photo without their permission or refuse to remove it if they revoke permission.

Photo Shelf Life Even with permission, photos should not be used indefinitely by a church. At least once a year, review the photos on your website and update as necessary. Any photos that are more than a couple years old should not be used in church publications or online. Please note that it is also best practice to remove photos of anyone who is deceased from the website as soon as possible, unless instructed otherwise by their families.

A few questions to ask before deciding whether to post a photo or video:

- Do you have the permission you need from those in the photo/video?
- Does the photo/video intrude on a private moment, private property, or event where privacy would be expected?
- Does the photo/video portray those in it in a positive or neutral light?

NB: Avoid posting photos that portray someone in an objectionable or unflattering way.

