Guidelines for Photography in the MCSA

Preamble

“In light of our current policies on ethical communication, Conference calls on all Methodist people to desist from the practice of taking photographs of vulnerable people who receive assistance from the church and directs the Communications Unit with relevant Units to further provide ethical guidelines relating to the protection of identity and dignity, surrounding the taking and use of photographs.” Resolutions of Conference 2016

Although there seem to be no legal guidelines, policies and or legislation governing photography of vulnerable persons, in particular children, specific provisions and the various constitutions of the countries of our Connexion can be interpreted to advocate for the protection and upholding of the dignity of all persons. It is through reference to such provisions and an acknowledgement that with the advent of the smart phone has led to ever increasing trigger happy citizen journalism that the guidelines below were crafted. The points below serve as guidelines when taking pictures and or reporting on vulnerable persons.

- A photographer may take pictures of persons and or buildings in public spaces - individuals cannot use the right to privacy as a defence against such pictures being taken in public areas. This is different to pictures taken in the private residence of an individual during mission visits or a public space where reasonable privacy applies including a church building.
- Seek permission before taking pictures of vulnerable persons. A proviso/ disclaimer may be announced or printed at all conventions and conferences to say that photographs will be taken at the event and if anyone has issues with this to please see the organisers of the event.
- Individuals taking photographs must exercise exceptional care and consideration when reporting about children and or the elderly or other vulnerable groups. Children who have been victims of abuse or who have been charged with or convicted of a crime cannot and should not be identified, without the consent of their legal guardians (or a similarly responsible adult) and the child. Such disclosure should always be in the best interests of the child.
- The best interests of each child are to be protected over any other consideration, including advocacy for children’s issues and the promotion of child rights. Avoid visually or otherwise identifying children unless it is overwhelmingly in the interest of the child.
- Unicef says that when interviewing children, special attention must be paid to each child’s right to privacy and confidentiality, to have their opinions heard, to participate in decisions affecting them and to be protected from harm and retribution.
- The views of the child should be taken into account to respect the child’s rights.
- Do not publish a story or an image that might put the child, siblings or peers at risk even when identities are not revealed this includes but is not limited to social media.
- All church reporters, organization communications officers and CCS representatives must be sensitive and accurate when reporting issues involving children and other vulnerable groups. Consider carefully the consequences of reporting any information
governing children.

- Seek independent verification of information provided by children and take special care to ensure this takes places without putting child informants at risk.
- Endeavour to avoid the use of sexualized images of children.
- Treat all subjects with respect and dignity. Give special consideration to vulnerable subjects and compassion to victims of crime or tragedy. Intrude on private moments of grief and pain only when there is an overriding and justifiable need to show this and even then, some identities may need to be hidden.
- Similar care should be taken when photographing any vulnerable groups including the aged; disabled and mentally challenged.
- We are not to further stigmatize and discriminate against the vulnerable. Ours is to like John Wesley, *Do no harm, Do good, stay in love with God.*

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