

St. Monica Parish Policy for Communications

(Updated September 7, 2011)

INTRODUCTION

Prior to the internet age, church communication referred to the transfer of information within the walls of the church via faith sharing and witness, preaching, sacramental celebrations, education and formation programs. Today, parishioners and members of our community enjoy access to parish information via a growing mix of electronic and print media. However, these new communications channels are not without challenges and limitations. Ease of computer access creates an environment for unauthorized and inconsistent posting of information, as well as conflicting information from other sources.

In 1997, the USCCB published a document entitled “*The Pastoral Plan for Church Communication*” affirming the place of mass communication as a means to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ to the world. The document was written primarily as a guide for diocesan planning. However, it has become clear that parishes also have a responsibility to participate in mass communication of the Good News on the ground level.

The expansive nature of communications technology has necessitated the development of this communications policy to facilitate continued growth in the area of communication and establish boundaries protecting the integrity of the information being delivered while safeguarding the unique charism of St. Monica.

The following policy applies to all forms of external communication as defined in the policy.

PURPOSE OF POLICY

1. To maximize best practices for wide-ranging delivery of the Good News via mass media and electronic communications channels.
2. To ensure all communications reflect the character and Christian values of our parish.
3. To ensure that all St. Monica ministries and programs have appropriate opportunities for and frequency of communications to parishioners regarding ministries and parish programs.
4. To minimize the risk to St. Monica's reputation that can be caused by improper and unauthorized external communications.

PROHIBITED USE OF EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

1. **PARTISAN COMMUNICATION.** Church communication may not be used for partisan political messages. Association, representation or endorsement of, or by, any political candidate, party, or campaign, whether actual, inferred or implied is prohibited.
2. **ADVERTISING.** No aspect of church communications may be used to promote any activity resulting in financial gain of a staff member, parishioner, or business, with the exception of sponsored advertising which supports the cost of printing the Sunday bulletin.
3. **UNAUTHORIZED COMMUNICATIONS CHANNELS.** Unauthorized websites, blogs, social network sites, direct mailings, and use of the parish name and/or logo are not permitted. Only members of St. Monica communications staff and pastoral staff shall maintain external communications channels on behalf of the parish.

MEDIA RELATIONS

Only authorized St. Monica staff spokespersons such as the Pastor(s) and communications staff, may communicate directly with members of the media on behalf of the parish. It is in the best interest of St. Monica to maintain relations with the media in an open, pragmatic manner, and respond promptly to their legitimate interests.

1. All media requests should be recorded accurately and passed on in the following order: 1.) Pastor(s), 2.) communications staff or, 3.) departmental directors. Media requests include inquiries for interviews, commentary and information, and include all media – TV/Radio, newspapers, magazines, local/national media and internet sites.
2. Authorized St. Monica spokespersons will respond on behalf of the parish, or assist in identifying the appropriate person from staff to handle the response.
3. Ministry volunteers are not authorized to speak to reporters without advance knowledge and coordination with the appropriate staff spokesperson or communications personnel. Volunteers who are approached by the media should be instructed to direct all media calls to the appropriate staff spokespersons or communications personnel.
4. All media calls are to be reported to the communications staff for follow-up and archiving. Provide the reporter's name, media outlet, email address and telephone number, the anticipated publication date, and the subject of the story.

CRISIS COMMUNICATION

When a significant event or grave situation occurs at St. Monica parish or school, it is important to communicate the unexpected or significant event or grave situation to the pastor and archdiocese office immediately. These may include, but are not limited to natural disasters, accidents with injury, law enforcement or firefighter notification and response at the parish, a death, serious misconduct by a student, faculty, staff, school lockdowns, etc.

Communication from a parish office regarding unexpected events or serious incidents must be channeled through the Diocesan office of Communications. In the event of an extreme crisis, the situation and the parish must be handled immediately through the Diocesan Office of Communications.

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Email: gotolski@archindy.org

PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES

The following represents current Procedures and Guidelines for current channels of external communication.

PARISH TELEPHONES/FRONT OFFICE WELCOMING OF PARISHIONERS

1. The front office team of St. Monica stands as the face of the parish and the Catholic Church as a whole. It is vital in each encounter to maintain a strong sense of hospitality and provide an extension of Christ's love for all.
2. Front office staff is responsible for creating an atmosphere that is welcoming and offers an "at home" feeling for all those entering the front office. They should possess a genuine joyful attitude regarding working with parishioners and the public. You never get a second chance to make a first impression...and we're creating the first impression of the entire parish.
3. All incoming calls should be answered in a courteous, friendly and professional manner.
 - All calls should be answered with a friendly greeting, identify the parish and the person answering the phone and offer immediately assistance. "Good morning, St. Monica parish. This is Martha. How can I help you?"
 - Show empathy to build an instant relationship with your caller by using a warm, friendly tone of voice.
 - Repeat names, telephone numbers and email addresses to make sure you have them right.
 - Use the call as a chance to update phone and address information in ACS.
 - End the call on a positive note. Check to see that your caller has all the information they were asking for and sign off with a friendly note.
4. Front office staff must be well-informed of the activities, contacts and policies of the parish and ensure that accurate information and resources are available to those who need them. There are instances when we won't have the answer for a specific question. In these cases, please respond, "I don't know the answer to that, but I will find out and get back to you."
5. Good decision-making and communication skills are vital, as well as an ability to calmly and effectively manage high-pressure situations.
6. Realize we are often faced with having to give someone an answer they don't like, however, we should always be kind and patient in delivering disappointing news.

PARISH BULLETIN

1. Bulletin notices must be submitted no later than noon on Sunday the weekend before they are to appear in the church bulletin. Due to space limitations, priority will be given to parish sponsored events.
2. Items to be considered for publication in the bulletin should be submitted:
 - via email parishoffice@stmonicaindy.org
 - faxed to the Parish Office at 317-253-3342 or
 - delivered in written format to the Parish Office, Monday-Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
3. Please note that extra time may be needed for bulletin announcements requiring Spanish translation.
4. Bulletin announcements are generally limited to twice per event and may be edited for space.
5. Bulletin inserts (flyers) are not permitted.

PASTOR/CANTOR/GENERAL ANNOUNCEMENTS AT MASS

1. The purpose of the Mass is to worship God and be nourished in the Holy Eucharist. The rubrics provide that brief announcements may be made after the prayer after Communion. Therefore, it is this parish's policy to provide for announcements to be made at that time, but also to take care that those announcements are both relevant and, as the rubrics instruct, brief.
2. All announcements will be made by the cantor. The cantor makes the announcements as approved by pastoral staff. Please do not request that the priest make announcements, as he is present to celebrate the mass and join the community in prayer.
3. Announcements are limited generally to twice per event. The week prior to the event, an announcement of an explanatory nature (the event is coming up) may be made. On the week of the event, an announcement indicating that action is currently required with regard to the event (i.e., register now, buy your ticket now, etc.) may be made.
4. Announcements should be kept to one or two short sentences and must be submitted **no later than 9 a.m. on the Wednesday** of the week prior to the announcement date.
5. Announcements submitted later will not be accepted except in extreme cases (such as an emergency relief effort). Staff reserves the right to edit announcements for length. If a scheduling conflict occurs that would prohibit making the desired announcement, the staff representative will contact the requester to make alternate arrangements.
6. When appropriate, all announcements will be made at all seven weekend masses. When necessary, Spanish translation will be provided by staff.
7. If the announcement corresponds to a need for which the parish has a pastoral responsibility (e.g., a need for catechists, Appeals, etc.), the parish staff may elect to announce this more often or may elect to have a more personal appeal by the celebrant.

MINISTRY INVITATION/APPEAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. The parish bulletin and website should be the primary tools used to communicate ministry events to the parish and recruit new members. Ministry invitations are of a slightly longer nature, where a more personal ministry appeal is desired. These usually consist of a representative from the group coming forward to make the announcement.
2. Ministry appeals are permitted on rare occasions.
3. The request should be submitted to the director of communication for review and approval four weeks prior to the desired announcement date.
4. The appeal must be prepared in writing and submitted with the request. It shall be no more than two minutes in length.
5. Ministry appeals will be done after the prayer after Communion, and before all other announcements.
6. If a scheduling conflict occurs that would prohibit making the desired announcement, the staff representative will contact the requester to make alternate arrangements.

PRINT ADVERTISING

1. The communications staff is available to coordinate print advertising, which may include media buying and design.
2. No print advertising should be purchased on the parish's behalf without the approval of the communications director.

TABLE USE IN NARTHEX

1. St. Monica sponsored ministries may promote their programs or conduct sign-ups in Narthex on Saturdays and Sundays before and after mass.
2. The use of Narthex tables must be scheduled through the parish office at least two weeks prior to the weekend and is subject to availability. Two tables are available with the expectation that two ministries per table permit display for up to four ministries per weekend.
3. No freestanding signs are permitted. Displays must be contained to table top space.
4. All display materials are the responsibility of the individual ministry and should be monitored by a member representing the ministry or program. The parish is not responsible for items left or displayed on tables.
5. Selling of goods is not permitted in the narthex. Parish ministries conducting fundraising activities may contact the parish office for an acceptable location to set up a table or booth.
6. Selling of goods by outside vendors or non-ministry-related companies or individuals is prohibited.

PARISH MARQUEE

1. The marquee located on Michigan Road may be used to promote parish-sponsored events or programs.
2. Space is limited to three lines of 21 characters for letters and spaces in between.
3. The marquee is updated once a week only on either Tuesday evening or Wednesday morning.
4. Marquee requests should be submitted to parishoffice@stmonicaindy.org at least one month prior to posting date.
5. All messages are subject to review and approval of pastoral staff.

PARISH TRANSLATION POLICY

1. St. Monica offers limited translation services for St. Monica-sponsored programs and communications only.
2. All requests for translations should be submitted via email to parishoffice@stmonicaindy.org. In the rare cases when email is not available, the request should be type-written and submitted to the parish office during regular office hours.
3. All requests should be submitted to the parish office and not made directly to the Hispanic Ministry Office.
4. Allow 3 business days for translations 1-2 paragraphs in length; allow two weeks for all other translation requests.
5. Translation services are limited and subject to review and approval of pastoral staff.

PARISH WEBSITE

1. St. Monica has one authorized website, **www.stmonicaindy.org**, to represent its ministries, events, activities, staff members, parishioners.
2. Individual ministry web pages should link from the www.stmonicaindy.org website and not utilize independent domain names or routing. The web editor is available to train and assist ministry and program leaders who wish to upload their own content. Non-staff members are granted limited permission on the website.
3. The web editor strives to ensure the website meets the needs of visitors, members, and friends of the Church and works with the developer to expand usage of the site.
4. Home page details are handled by and communicated by the communications staff.
5. The parish bulletin is uploaded to the website weekly, typically each Monday.
6. Translation of posts on the website is not necessary, as all visitors to the site have the option to select their preferred language (English, Spanish or French) in the pull-down menu in the lower right corner of the home page.
7. The parish website includes links only to non-commercial sites that are not in conflict with the parish mission and goals.
8. In posting photos, it is St. Monica policy not to identify children under the age of 18. If at any time an image appears on the parish website that a parent or parishioner wishes to be removed, they should contact the parish office, and it will be removed immediately.

SOCIAL MEDIA, I.E. FACEBOOK, TWITTER & BLOGS

1. The communications staff is responsible for managing the content and frequency of updates for social media and monitoring on social media sites such as the official St. Monica Facebook page (St. Monica Indy).
2. The intent of social media for parish use is to give witness to the Good News in such a way which is open, transparent, and safe for all users. St. Monica social media content should reflect current and upcoming events, news, and commentary related to the activities and mission of St. Monica.
3. No social media sites should be created by individuals not employed by St. Monica or set up using a personal email account. Please contact the director of communication if you would like to set up a Facebook page for your ministry so it can be linked to a St. Monica email account. This ensures that if a ministry member moves from the parish or is no longer active in the ministry, the page remains in perpetuity. Individual ministry members can be assigned as page administrators so they are free to post messages, events and photos on the ministry's behalf.
4. The communications staff may remove postings or social networking sites at any time if content is deemed inappropriate.
5. Social media for parish use is never to be used to establish private communications between parties.

POSTING OF SIGNS/MATERIALS

1. Information posted on bulletin boards and/or the parish grounds must be reviewed, approved by the parish communications staff. The staff representative will also write an “expiration date” on the posting, after which the sign will be removed. Due to limited bulletin board space, not all materials can be posted.
2. Approved information will be posted on the bulletin boards in the gathering space or on the grounds by parish staff members only. Unapproved information will be removed.
3. Absolutely nothing is to be taped/pinned to the inside or outside of doors, walls or windows of the church. Outside signage is limited and must be requested through the parish office and receive the Pastor’s approval at least two weeks prior to the date requested.
4. No flyers may be placed on the windshields of vehicles in the St. Monica parking lot.

PRESS RELEASES

1. Press releases are coordinated by the communications and pastoral staff
2. Press releases may also be written by ministry or program volunteers; however, they must be approved by the parish communications director before being released to the media.
3. Press releases promoting upcoming events require four weeks lead time.
5. Staff members are responsible for reviewing and returning releases written to the writer in a timely manner to meet publisher deadlines.

OUTDOOR BANNERS

1. Professionally printed vinyl banners may be positioned at the main and back driveways to promote parish and archdiocese events only.
2. A limit of two banners may be displayed at any one time and may not be displayed for more than two weeks.
3. Scheduling banner placement must be arranged with the parish communications director.
4. The originating party is responsible all printing expenses (they may not be billed to parish).
5. The originating party is responsible for installing and removing banners. All banners not removed after two weeks will be disposed of.

E-MAIL COMMUNICATIONS, FORWARDS, AND CC’S

1. Individuals within St. Monica communicating to other individuals within and/or without the church are using or assuming the name and reputation of St. Monica. Church email should be restricted to church business and activities.
2. Email sent using @stmonicaindy.org addresses should include complete sender identification such as an identifying signature which includes, name, official title, phone extension and email address, plus the church name, address, contact information and website.
3. As a rule, group emails should generally be sent using blind copy or distribution lists in order to prevent unauthorized sharing of email addresses.
4. Forwarded emails should be edited to eliminate originating distribution lists unless permission to share addresses has been granted.

PHOTOGRAPHY POLICY

1. Baptisms, Confirmations, First Communions, and weddings are golden photo opportunities. They are transformative events to be rightfully treasured in memory. There are many moments throughout the course of these special days that offer families and friends the chance to take pictures. The crucial question is whether it is appropriate to do so during the actual reception of a sacrament. It is expected that photography during the mass and special events be limited and discreet. Photographers should be aware of the sacred environment, being careful not to take photos or move in a way that distracts the participants in the congregation.
2. No photos may be taken during exposition of the Blessed Sacrament (Eucharistic Adoration) or liturgy of the Eucharist
3. Photographers are never allowed in the sanctuary or on altar steps
4. Parishioners should not leave their pew during mass; please take photos from your pew.
5. No tripods should be used or set up during mass.
6. Flash photography is permitted before and after the mass only.
7. Photographers are not permitted to stand in the main aisle of the church
8. Special guidelines are available for photography at weddings on the parish website

ST. MONICA COMPUTER, INTERNET & WIRELESS CONNECTIVITY POLICY

1. Computer, network and Internet access is a service provided on campus to the staff, parishioners, volunteers and visitors of St. Monica and is intended for parish-related purposes (such as communicating with ministry team members). Use of St. Monica's computers, network or wireless service should not cause incremental expense to St. Monica parish, nor should St. Monica resources be wasted. Users should not send mass mailings or run private businesses at the expense of St. Monica parish without proper permission. When accessing the computer, network, and Internet at St. Monica Catholic School, all existing local, state, federal laws as well as St. Monica policies must be followed including those that deal with intellectual property protection, privacy, sexual harassment, data security, and confidentiality.
2. Each person using St. Monica's computer, network, or Internet access shall identify themselves honestly, accurately, and completely when corresponding or participating in interactive activities such as discussion boards, social media, instant messaging, etc.
3. Computing, network, and Internet resources must not be used to knowingly violate the laws and regulations of the United States or any other nation, or the laws and regulations of any state, city, province, or local jurisdiction in any material way.
4. All users have no right of ownership or expectation of personal privacy to their Internet usage, including personal computers or laptops while on the St. Monica campus. It is possible to monitor network and Internet usage, and St. Monica parish reserves the right to inspect any and all network traffic and files at any time. St. Monica reserves the right, without notice, to limit or restrict any computer, network or Internet usage.
5. Offensive content may not be accessed, displayed, archived, stored, distributed, edited, or recorded using the St. Monica parish network, printing, or computing resources. Offensive content includes, but is not limited to, pornography, sexual comments or

images, profanity, racial slurs, gender-specific comments, or any content that can reasonably offend someone on the basis of sex, race, color, religion, national origin, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, mental or physical disability, veteran status or any protected status of an individual or that individual's relatives or associates. Any content that may be interpreted as libelous, defamatory or slanderous is prohibited.

6. Computer, network, or Internet access shall not be used to run a personal business, gamble, conduct political campaigns, for personal gain, or to take part in any prohibited or illegal activity.
7. No user may use St. Monica's computers, network, or Internet access to post messages to web message boards, chat rooms, "weblogs," "listservs," or other Internet communication facility, except in the furtherance of St. Monica-sponsored ministries or mission.
8. No one may use St. Monica facilities or technology to knowingly download or distribute pirated software or data. Any software or files downloaded via the network or Internet may be used only in ways that are consistent with their licenses or copyrights.
9. No one may use St. Monica facilities or technology to monitor use of computing or network resources by any other individual, or perform any probing, scanning, "sniffing," or vulnerability testing.
10. No one may use St. Monica computers, network, or Internet access to deliberately propagate any virus, worm, Trojan horse, trap-door, or back-door program code or knowingly disable or overload any computer system, network, or to circumvent any system intended to protect the privacy or security of another user.
11. No one may install, remove, or otherwise modify any hardware or software for the purpose of bypassing, avoiding, or defeating any filtering, monitoring, or other security measures St. Monica parish may have in place, except as otherwise provided by St. Monica parish policies.

St. Monica Parish Communication Request Form

Name _____ Parish Ministry _____

Email _____ Phone _____

Type of communication requested (please check below that apply):

Mass Announcement Ministry Appeal Bulletin Announcement Table Kiosk

Date Requested: _____

Please include written announcement in clear, concise wording that describes: What is the event? **Who** is it for? **When** and **where** will the event take place? **When** is the deadline to sign up? (optional) Examples: *Training for new Lectors will take place on Friday, September 26 at 7:30 pm; please call Jennifer if you will be attending. Please visit the Fair Trade crafts display in the Parish Center today during Donut Sunday and support craftspeople in developing nations.* Requested information below or attached on a separate page: Communication Request Form information can also be e-mailed to the appropriate staff representative if all the information listed above is included in the e-mail (contact the staff member for e-mail information).

Communication Request Form information can also be e-mailed to parishoffice@stmonicaindy.org

I have read the Parish Policy for Communications

Signature of requester _____ Date _____

Parish Staff Approval Signature _____ Date _____