



Guidelines for using photos of congregation members

Photos of congregation members bring your congregation Web site to life, providing a window in to the vitality and friendliness of the community that gathers on Sunday morning and all through the week. A common question is how to respect the privacy rights and concerns of members and protect the safety of children pictured.

In most general terms: images of adults engaged in congregation activities and used to report on congregational events can be used without seeking permission. In these cases, it is always prudent to let the people being photographed that these shots may be used by the congregation. With images of children (the relevant age is under 18 years old), or with images that are used outside the immediate activity or news story (e.g. used instead as part of general Web site design elements), permission should be sought.

Here are some common-sense guidelines and resources to help address these issues:

- **Develop and post a privacy policy** for your congregation Web site and include a section on the use of images. This way, everyone -- congregation photographers and members -- will know the guidelines you strive to uphold. Here are some suggestions taken from the privacy policy of [Union United Methodist Church](#), in Boston:
 - We try not to post anything that would be embarrassing, objectionable or hurtful to anyone in the photo. If we know someone is shy about such things, we ask them before posting the photo.
 - We don't put names as captions with photos (except for pastors/staff or other adult members who have given expressed written consent)
 - We will gladly provide credit for who took a particular photo if desired by the photographer, and we would certainly honor any copyright wishes or restrictions.
 - We will gladly remove any photo immediately upon request.

- **Distinguish between the uses of a photo for "news" content versus as a "design" element.** The Upper Columbia Conference of the Seventh Day Adventist Church has photo guidelines that assert that "[News Photos Permission Usually not Necessary](#)." Their 5 rules for photo use include:
 - Do not intrude into anyone's solitude, seclusion or private property without permission.
 - Do not publish (whether by photos or stories) private information without permission.
 - Do not print any photo or story that presents the subject in a false light.
 - Do not appropriate any photo of any person for any commercial use (such as advertisements, or even for illustrations months after the news event) without permission.
 - In addition, unlike the public media, church papers generally follow the rule of not publishing photos or stories that present people in a negative light, even if the facts warrant such coverage.
- **When appropriate member photos aren't available, find stock images to meet your needs.** Lots of sources exist for stock images. Just enter the words royalty free images in any search engine. Add the word religious if you want to narrow your search. Here are some additional sources you may want to explore:
 - Photos from the [ELCA Archives](#) are free-to-use for ELCA congregations.
 - Likewise, images from <http://photos.elca.org> or the [ELCA Global Mission and World Hunger](#) photo galleries.
 - www.wylio.com is a service for locating and using free images. Wylio automatically sizes the image, hosts the image, and builds the photo credit into the code you can insert into your Website or blog.
 - www.majorityworld.com is an interesting source for paid images from global, indigenous photographers.

Other resources:

- Sample image use [release form](#). If the church wishes to use names of adults photographed, the permission/release form should be modified to add that permission.
- [What Permissions are Needed for Photography or Videography at Congregational Events?](#) A Web posting from the New Media for Unitarian Universalists site.
- The [World Intellectual Property Organization](#) (WIPO), an agency of the United Nations, provides a [list of considerations to keep in mind when making photos of people](#), for example: Is the person wearing something protected by copyright? Does your photo publicize private facts about the person? Are you using someone's image for commercial benefit? Are you suggesting that the person is endorsing something? Are you defaming or putting someone in a false light?