

The global church has local rules.

Much of this guide reflects common practice in the United States. Many other countries treat photos of people as protected personal information, with stricter rules on consent, notice signs and children. Here's the short version. Details are on the next page.

WHERE	MAIN LAW	ADULTS IN A SERVICE	CHILDREN
United States	No single national law	Notice is common practice. Consent is needed to use a face in advertising.	Written parent permission is the standard practice.
United Kingdom	UK GDPR	Notice, door signs and an easy opt-out. Consent for close-ups and promotion.	Written parent consent.
European Union	GDPR	Clear notice and an easy way to say no. Some countries add image rights.	Written parent consent.
South Africa	POPIA	Consent must be voluntary, specific and informed.	A parent or guardian must consent. An opt-out notice usually isn't enough.
Canada	PIPEDA and provincial laws	Depends on the province. BC, Alberta and Quebec matter most.	Written parent consent.
Australia	Privacy Act	Covers larger organizations. A newer privacy tort applies to everyone.	Follow your state's child safe standards.
New Zealand	Privacy Act 2020	Covers churches of every size. Explain why you take photos and how you'll use them.	Take extra care and get parent consent.

Tell people

Signs, a slide and a line in your bulletin.

Make opting out easy

A camera-free section and a simple way to ask.

Get it in writing for kids

Signed parent consent, kept on file.

Delete when asked

Quickly, kindly and everywhere it lives.

The children column shows common church practice. It isn't always a legal requirement. **These four habits work in every country.** They go a long way toward meeting the law and keeping trust.

Country by country.

United States

There's no single national law on church photos. People at a public gathering have limited privacy expectations, and a church can set photo rules on its own property. Using someone's face to advertise or promote can require consent under state law. A few states, including Illinois, Texas and Washington, regulate face recognition data, so check before turning on face tagging in a photo library.

European Union

The same GDPR rules apply across the EU, and some countries add their own image rights. Expect clear notices for everyone, written consent for children, and an easy way for anyone to say no.

Canada

The federal law, PIPEDA, mostly covers commercial activity, so many churches fall outside it. Provincial laws can still apply. BC's privacy law covers non-profits, Alberta's covers some, and Quebec's Law 25 can apply too.

New Zealand

The Privacy Act 2020 applies to almost every organization, churches included, whatever their size. Tell people why you're taking photos and how you'll use them, and take extra care with children.

United Kingdom

Under UK GDPR, a photo of someone you can recognize is personal data. Many churches publish a photography privacy notice, post signs at the door and offer a camera-free seating area. Get written consent for children and for close-up or promotional use.

South Africa

POPIA treats identifiable photos as personal information. Consent has to be voluntary, specific and informed. For anyone under 18 it must come from a parent or guardian, and a "tell us if you object" notice usually isn't enough.

Australia

The Privacy Act covers organizations above a revenue threshold, so many smaller churches fall outside it. People can now sue over serious invasions of privacy, whatever the size of the church. State child safe standards often shape photo rules for kids.

Everywhere else

Treat the practices in this guide as a starting point, not the finish line. Ask your denomination, network or a local attorney what applies where you serve. Many denominations already have a policy you can adopt.

General information only, not legal advice. Laws vary by country, state, county and city, and they change. Check with a local attorney or your country's privacy regulator before you set policy.

"Let every person be subject to the governing authorities."

ROMANS 13:1 (ESV)