PHOTO RELEASE FORMS: WHAT MUST CHURCHES DO?

DISCLAIMER:

Every country and region can have its differences. This is not legal advice. I will show you what a few real churches are doing.



1. Minors

For children and minors, it's best to always seek a release form (you can do this during check-in).

If a parent/guardian doesn't want their child's photo taken, put a red wrist band on the child. And then don't use any photos with that child.

2. The USA & Canada

Next, for adults. In Canada, in the charter of rights and freedoms we have what is written as, "reasonable expectation of privacy." And in general, this is interpreted to mean it's okay to photograph people in public places, such as on the street or in a park, because there's no expectation of privacy - so long as you're not identifying a person individually. Churches are typically considered public spaces. This same idea exists in America.

3. The European Union

In the EU, under GDPR, those appearing in film or photography must give written consent, because attendance at a church service reveals religious belief, which is a special category data under GDPR. You should specify on the consent form exactly what aspects of the service you intend to film. Regular attendees at the church need to only sign this once.

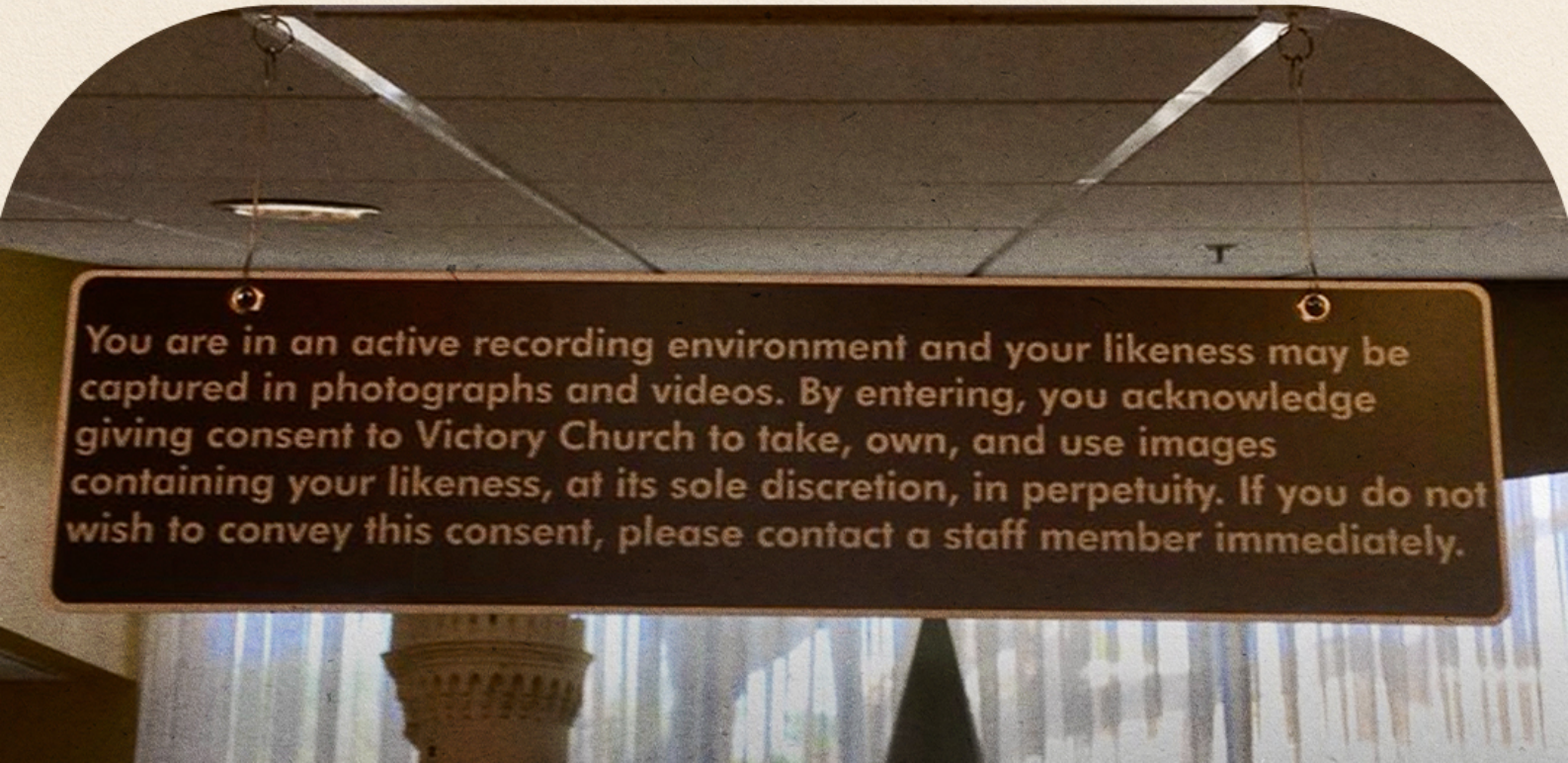
4. Disclaimer Statement

Now, morally, just because you can doesn't mean you should - and that's up for your church to navigate.

But, in terms of practical solutions, some churches add disclaimer statements to bulletins and/or the website letting parishioners know that photographers may be present and if a person wants to opt out to head to the lobby and talk to a person at the next steps desk (the church that shared this idea with me said they've never had anyone opt out).

5. Sanctuary Notice

Another common approach is to post signage in the lobby (see image below). If you don't want this signage to be permanent, you can simply set up temporary signage for the week you're during photos (baptism Sundays only for example).



6. Blackout Rows/Sections In The Sanctuary



Consider having a section in your sanctuary that doesn't get filmed or photographed (with signage to denote this). That way folks that wish to be excluded can sit there knowing they won't have their photo or video taken.