Uplift

AI Principles for the Church

A policy for pastors, staff, ministry leaders and volunteers on using artificial intelligence with wisdom, accountability and care.

> *"...test all things. Hold fast to what is good."*
>
> 1 Thessalonians 5:21

Church _____

Adopted _____

Next review _____

1 Purpose

AI should serve human flourishing and the mission of the church. It must never replace the wisdom, discernment, accountability and relationships God has entrusted to people.

Technology can be a real help to ministry, but it always serves the mission; it never sets its direction. AI is a powerful assistant when used thoughtfully and a liability when used carelessly. These principles are here to keep us in the first category.

We are committed to using AI in ways that honor the dignity of every person, each one made in the image of God (Genesis 1:27), and that protect the trust our church family places in us.

> *"And whatever you do, in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him."*
>
> **Colossians 3:17**

Who this policy covers

Everyone who uses AI for church work: pastors and elders, paid staff, ministry and small-group leaders, volunteers acting on behalf of the church, and contractors. "The church" means **Church name** and every ministry and entity that represents it.

2 Core convictions

1 People are responsible, not AI

AI is a tool, and people are responsible for the outcomes. It can help with recommendations, drafts and analysis, but pastors, staff and leaders remain accountable for every decision. AI is never given final authority.

2 Scripture is the authority

AI can help us study, but it does not interpret the Bible for us. It is no substitute for prayer, the Holy Spirit's guidance, sound doctrine or the counsel of the church body.

3 Human review is required

AI-generated work must be reviewed by a person before it is preached, taught, published, sent outside the church, used to make decisions, or used to represent the church in any way.

4 Trust matters more than convenience

People share their burdens, prayer requests and private struggles with the church. That trust is sacred. We will protect personal and confidential information and never trade privacy for efficiency.

3 What we mean by “AI”

Chatbots

Tools like ChatGPT, Claude and Gemini. You converse with them to ask questions, explore ideas, research, role-play scenarios or generate content.

Agents

Tools that carry out multi-step tasks or take action for you: writing and running code, building websites, analyzing data, drafting and sorting email, or operating other software.

The line between the two is blurring, since most chatbots can now take some actions. The distinction still matters: agents *do* things in the world, so the stakes of a mistake are higher.

4 Approved tools

Use only approved tools, on a plan that doesn’t train on your data. Church-related AI use happens only through accounts the church has approved. Free consumer plans often train on what you type; business and team plans with proper data-processing agreements typically don’t.

Volunteers who use personal AI accounts must not enter any church, member or ministry information into them.

Approving a new tool

Before using a new AI tool for church work, submit it to **designated AI contact** with: what it will be used for, what information it will access, whether it trains on what you enter, and whether it can take actions outside the church (sending, posting, purchasing).

5 Good uses of AI in ministry

AI can support thoughtful, efficient and creative work when it is used with approved tools, within the data boundaries below, and with human review. For example:

- **Brainstorming** sermon series themes, small-group questions, outreach ideas, event concepts and ways to welcome newcomers.
- **Drafting and editing** announcements, newsletters, emails, social posts, slides and internal documents, or adjusting their tone.
- **Summarizing** non-sensitive material: commentaries, public research, denominational reports, or meeting notes with personal details removed.
- **Organizing** information into outlines, service run sheets, event plans, checklists, timelines and volunteer schedules (without personal data).
- **Explaining** unfamiliar topics: historical and cultural background, theological terms, software, or contract and lease language, ahead of proper review.
- **Pressure-testing** a plan or message by asking for weaknesses, blind spots, counterarguments, or how it might land with a skeptic or a newcomer.

- **Rehearsing** difficult conversations, using no real names or identifying details.
- **Supporting study** by suggesting questions to investigate and sources to check, always verified against Scripture and trusted references.
- **Translating and simplifying** for children's ministry, people who speak other languages, or accessibility needs, while preserving meaning.
- **First drafts** of editable work such as letters, reports, curriculum outlines, spreadsheets, graphics concepts and website copy.
- **Technical help** with the church website, app, AV and livestream setup, provided a qualified person reviews the output before it is used.

> AI may assist with ministry. It may not replace human judgment, pastoral wisdom, subject-matter expertise or final approval.

6 Levels of risk

Level	Examples	What it requires
Low	Brainstorming, outlining, rewriting, summarizing public information, first drafts of announcements and social posts.	Normal care and a read-through.
Medium	Sermon and teaching research, curriculum, public communications, website copy, translation, internal strategy, technical and code help.	Review and fact-checking, including every Scripture reference.
High	Pastoral care and counseling, safeguarding, children and youth, giving and finance, HR and volunteers, legal matters, member or personal data, health and mental health, crisis situations, doctrinal or public statements on behalf of the church.	Approval from **church leadership** or a defined special process.

7 Restricted and prohibited uses

AI does not make decisions about people

AI may not decide hiring, staff or volunteer selection, performance, discipline (including church discipline), compensation, membership, benevolence or care eligibility, or anything else affecting a person's livelihood, rights, standing or access to help. It may assist with administrative drafting or planning only when a person reviews the result and no sensitive personal data goes into an unapproved tool.

AI output can contain bias, incomplete reasoning, false confidence and plain errors. It may support human judgment in matters involving people, but never replace human responsibility, discernment or final decision-making.

AI does not replace Scripture, prayer, pastoral care or qualified counseling

Biblical, theological, pastoral and crisis-related content needs special care. AI may help with research, drafting and organization, but it must not stand in for Scripture, prayer, pastoral wisdom, doctrinal review, qualified counseling, emergency services or human discernment. Anything touching theology, mental health, self-harm, abuse, medical issues or crisis must be carefully reviewed before use. Anyone in danger should be directed to emergency services and a real person, never to an AI tool.

AI is never presented as a pastor

- AI cannot pray, and must never be described as praying for someone, offering spiritual direction, or speaking for God.
- Don't let AI reply to pastoral messages in a pastor's or staff member's name without that person reviewing and sending it themselves.
- Don't clone a pastor's or member's voice or likeness, or create altered images or video of real people, without their explicit consent and clear disclosure.

Preaching and teaching

AI may help with background research, outlines, illustrations and discussion questions. The message itself must be prayerfully prepared and owned by the person delivering it, checked against Scripture, and consistent with the church's statement of faith. Preachers and teachers are accountable for every word, as they always have been.

Children, youth and vulnerable adults

Never enter information about children, youth, vulnerable adults or any safeguarding concern into an AI tool. Never upload or edit photos or video of minors from church activities with AI.

8 Data and privacy

Treat anything you type as potentially readable by someone else. Don't share anything you wouldn't be comfortable seeing outside the church. That habit is the safest default, even on tools with strong privacy terms and on paid plans.

If it's sensitive offline, it's sensitive in a prompt. Even with approved tools, share only what is necessary, remove names and identifying details, and ask when unsure. Follow the church's privacy notice and any data-protection law that applies to it.

Never enter these into AI tools unless specifically approved

- Prayer requests, pastoral care notes, confessions and counseling records
- Member and attendee data: contact details, directories, attendance
- Anything about children, youth, vulnerable adults or safeguarding
- Health and mental-health information about anyone
- Giving and donor records, and financial information not already public
- Staff and volunteer personnel files, including background checks
- Legal or privileged information
- Passwords, access codes or details of church systems

Respect intellectual property

Worship songs and lyrics, published curriculum, books and many Bible translations are under copyright and licensing (for example, CCLI). Don't feed in material you don't have the rights to share, and remember that AI output can reproduce copyrighted text, music, images or code. Review before you use it.

9 When in doubt

If you're unsure whether a tool, prompt, type of information or use is appropriate, pause and ask **designated AI contact** before going ahead. As a rule: remove identifying details, use summaries instead of raw records, leave out sensitive information, and choose the lowest-risk way to get the task done.

> **AI should make our ministry more thoughtful, not less careful.**

10 Human review and accountability

You are accountable for the output, not the tool

AI makes confident mistakes: invented facts, made-up citations, plausible-looking but wrong code. Verify before you send, publish, preach or act. "The AI said so" is not a defense.

Check every Scripture reference

AI can misquote verses, invent references, and attribute words to theologians and church fathers that they never wrote. Check every quotation against the Bible itself and a trusted source before it reaches the congregation.

Anything public needs a human eye

Sermons, livestream content, social posts, newsletters, the website and anything sent to members are reviewed by a person first.

Keep a person in the loop for consequential actions

Especially with agents: anything irreversible or visible outside the church, such as sending messages, moving money, changing records, publishing or contacting members, is reviewed by a person before it happens.

Don't rely on a single answer

AI tools have blind spots and will repeat the same error with confidence. For anything important, cross-check against Scripture, trusted commentaries and primary sources.

Be open about AI use where it matters

Disclose AI use in published teaching and curriculum, grant applications, legal or regulatory filings, and anywhere the congregation or reader would reasonably want to know. Say what tool was used and for what: drafting, editing, analysis or code.

Keep thinking, and keep praying

AI is an aid to thinking, not a replacement for thought, study or prayer. If you can't explain or defend the output yourself, you're not ready to use it.

11 Rules for AI agents

Agents recommend; people decide. Agents may not send emails or texts, post to church accounts, make purchases or payments, deploy code, change member or giving records, access the church management system or other confidential systems, contact members, or take any irreversible action without a person reviewing and approving it first.

12 Reporting a problem

Report any AI-related mistake, concern or possible exposure of sensitive information promptly. Reporting early helps the church respond responsibly, limit harm and improve how we work. Examples include:

- Entering confidential, personal, pastoral, safeguarding, HR, financial or legal information into an unapproved AI tool.
- Finding that an AI tool may have stored, exposed, shared or trained on sensitive church information.
- Sending, publishing or preaching AI-generated content that included false information, made-up citations, misquoted Scripture, or unapproved theological, legal, financial or medical guidance.
- Letting an AI agent take an external or irreversible action without proper review.

- Using an unapproved AI tool for church work.
- Receiving AI output that seems biased, unsafe, harmful or out of step with the church's beliefs and values.
- Any AI use that could create pastoral, safeguarding, privacy, legal, security or reputational concerns.

If something goes wrong

1. Stop using the tool or output involved.
2. Don't delete or change any related records, prompts, outputs, files or messages.
3. Note the details: the tool, the date, what was entered, what came back, who was involved and any actions taken.
4. Tell **designated AI contact** as soon as possible. If children, youth or vulnerable adults are involved, also tell **safeguarding lead** straight away.
5. Follow any instructions for containment, correction, disclosure or further review. Some data breaches carry legal reporting duties.

> Reporting is not about punishing good-faith mistakes. It protects people, preserves trust, and helps the church use AI with wisdom, accountability and care.

13 Annual review

Church leadership will review these principles at least once a year, or sooner if AI tools, laws, security risks or ministry needs change significantly. Approved tools, restricted uses, data-handling expectations and reporting procedures may be updated as needed.

Adoption and acknowledgment

Adopted by the leadership of the church, and read and agreed by each person who uses AI for church work.

Adopted by (name and role) _____

Date adopted _____

Staff or volunteer name _____

Signature and date _____